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ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN THE NEPAL HIMALAYA

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Background

Though one can visualize the environmental problems in the mountain regions in almost all the countries of the world, the magnitude of the problem is very high in a mountainous and developing country like Nepal. Due to the rapid growth of population and consequent effect on over-exploitation of the depleting resources, ecological degradation is taking place everywhere in the Nepal Himalaya. The main objective of preparing this paper is to analyse environmental problems faced by Nepal, particularly in the hills and mountain regions. This paper, after portraying a geographical background of Nepal, throws light upon the global concern regarding the environmental problems of mountains, analyses the various causes and consequences of environmental degradation in Nepal, highlights upon some efforts made by the government to solve the problems, and concludes with some recommendations.

The Himalayas constitute the highest mountain system of the world. They extend for a distance of over 2,000 km from Kashmir in the west to Burma in the east (Hagen 1980: 41). Its breadth ranges from 150 km to 400 km and covers an area of 500,000 sq. km. Along this chain of mountains lie almost all the famous summits on the surface of the earth. Mt. Everest (8,848 metres), the highest peak on earth, lies in the Nepal Himalaya. The Himalayas are tectonic mountains formed by the upheaval of Tethyan sediments. It is believed that the Himalayas are still rising at the rate of 1 cm per year and that it took several million years to attain their present heights and structures (Sahni, 1989: 215). Among the mountainous regions of the world, the geologically young and tectonically unstable Himalayas form the world's most fragile ecological system. The Nepal Himalaya extend for about 800 km in the central part of the Himalayas to form the nucleus of one of the world's strategic ecological nerve-centres (Eckholm 1975: 764).

Nepal, occupying one-third of the Himalayan mountain system, is a land of diversity. About 75% of the total land of the kingdom is covered by

mountains and hills. The most obvious regional differentiations are the plains (Tarai) hills (Pahad) and high mountains (Himal) which form three broad geographic regions with its own distinctive environment. Consisting a broad subtropical zone along the central belt of the country, the hills are the threshold between high alpine mountains (Greater Himalayas) in the north and the fertile tropical Tarai plain (northern extension of the Ganges plain) in the south. The outer Himalaya (Siwalik) and middle Himalaya (Mahabharat Lekh) comprise the middle hill areas. The geographic regions of Nepal correspond to the altitudinally arranged ecological zones. About half of its total area over 1,500 metres above sea level deserves a close examination in terms of environmental economics (Gurung 1982 a:46).

The country has one of the highest densities of population (126 persons per sq. km in 1991) among the mountainous countries. According to the recent census report of 1991 the rate of population growth in Nepal between 1981 and 1991 was 2.1% per annum. Despite development efforts, national productivity has failed to keep pace with population growth. If the deteriorating situation of the mountain and hill environment is not reversed and better managed, this population growth may lead to the collapse of the delicately balanced ecological system between the Himalaya and the Ganges plain (Reiger, 1976). The future of valleys and plains is intimately bound to the development on the slopes and plateaus above (Eckholm, 1976: 75). Ecological changes in the highlands quickly lead to changes in the adjoining valleys and plains.

Global Concern

Since the first United Nations' concern in 1951, the highlands (land above 1,000 metres) have become a new horizon of ecological focus (Gurung 1981: 1). The magnitude of environmental problems in the global perspective was seriously realized during the U.N. conference on 'Human Environment' held at Stockholm, Sweden in June 1972. After realizing the precarious ecological situation prevailing in the mountains, particularly in the Andes and the Himalayas, various international seminars and workshops were held around the world (UNESCO 1973, 1974, 1977; Nepal Research Centre 1979; Ahmad et al. 1990; ICIMOD 1984; ICIMOD and UNESCO/MAB 1979; LEADERS 1992; etc.)

All such conferences and workshops have identified common problems and highlighted the increasingly deteriorating environment due to population pressure, especially in the mountain ecosystems and thereby increasing human interference with the depleting resources.

Though there are environmental problems everywhere, their intensity is dissimilar. In a mountainous and developing country like Nepal, the

environmental problems have been aggravated by rapid population growth, which has ultimately led to forest depletion for fuel wood, timber and fodder, and the expansion of agricultural land on more and more marginal areas to sustain the rapidly increasing hungry people. At present, the environmental situation of Nepal has become very fragile, posing a critical threat to the man-environment relationship.

Cause and Consequences of Environmental Degradation

In recent years, mountains, especially the Himalayas, have become the focal point of ecological concern. Among the mountainous countries, Nepal's ecological situation has become worse and the country is further approaching towards the brink of ecological collapse (Eckholm 1975, 1976; Reiger et al. 1976; Rana 1976; Proffenberger 1980; Bhatt, 1981; Moddie 1981; Gurung 1982; Bajracharya, 1983; Shrestha, 1983; Joshi 1984; Karan and Iijima 1986; Shrestha 1986; Ives and Messerli 1989; Bajracharya and Gurung 1992). The factors behind environmental problems in the Nepal Himalaya are natural as well as man-made. The natural processes of environmental degradation have been aggravated by man's quest for more food, fuel, fodder, timber and so forth. In probably no other mountain countries are the forces of ecological degradation building so rapidly and visibly (Eckholm 1976: 76). This ecological degradation can be easily observed if one travels through the Nepal Himalaya. Nepal provides the most dramatic example of spreading desertification due to reckless deforestation. 'In a flash within the decade ending 1971, Nepal lost 50% of its forest cover' (Moddie 1981: 344). According to the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation HMG/Nepal, four hundred thousand hectares of forests were destroyed in the Tarai and Inner Tarai region between 1964 and 1979, and an additional one hundred and sixty thousand hectares of forests were destroyed between 1979 and 1985. With the destruction of 5.4 million hectares of national forests, the total forest area in Nepal has been reduced to four million hectares or about 27% of the total land area of Nepal (*The Rising Nepal* 1992). It has been estimated that the desirable area of forest for a mountainous country like Nepal should be about 60% in order to keep the environment in a balanced state. The present rates of deforestation in Nepal are far higher than the natural regenerative capacity, causing severe environmental problems.

At present, according to the census report of 1991, 53.3% of the total population of Nepal lives in the hills and mountains. They cannot feed themselves on the deteriorating environment, forcing the hill people to migrate over the entire Tarai region and into the plains of India. Out-migration of the hill people is an indication of rapid environmental degradation in the Nepal Himalaya. The conditions will further steadily

deteriorate as population pressure on available agricultural land increases (Rana and Thapa 1975).

Table 1: Per Capita Agricultural Land and Persons per Hectare of Agricultural Land in Different Ecological Zones of Nepal (1974-75)

Region	Average per Capita agricultural land in hectare	Persons per hectare of agricultural land
Mountains	0.11	9.22
Hills	0.11	8.69
Tarai	0.30	3.34
Nepal	0.18	5.34

Source: National Planning Commission, 1974.

There is a heavy pressure of population on limited, poor and marginal agricultural land in the mountains and hills of Nepal (table 1). The fast growing population in the hills is extending its cropland to more and more marginal land which for reasons of topography and soil quality is unsuitable for agricultural practice (Shrestha 1990). Due to lack of job opportunities, the rapidly increasing population must depend on the subsistence agriculture. The ever increasing population in the hills has led to expansion of cropland on to steep and unstable slopes, overgrazing of animals in the woodlands, and reckless cutting down of trees from the dwindling forests for fuel, fodder and timber (Shrestha 1983: 97). Consequently, the area under forest is fast diminishing under the combined pressure of shifting cultivation, expansion of agricultural land, overgrazing of animals and wood gathering for timber and fuel. Similarly, natural vegetation still provides food, fodder, fertilizer, shelter and even raw materials for traditional rural cottage industries which has resulted in further destruction and devastation of the forest resources. Fuelwood in Nepal alone accounts for 95% of all wood consumption in rural areas and 87% of all energy consumption in the country (Malla and Shrestha 1983: 90). The deforestation process and expansion of unscientific agricultural practice on more and more marginal areas (not based on agricultural capabilities) in Nepalese hills and mountains have resulted in changing landuse patterns. Over-exploitation and mismanagement of the land resource along the hill slopes have set in the process of environmental degradation in the fertile valleys in the form of debris deposition and flood hazards. Thus, loss of fertile agricultural lands along the valleys in the middle hill region of Nepal leads to the decrease in agricultural production, forcing the people to occupy marginal and ecologically sensitive steep hill slopes for cultivation.

The destruction process of forest resources in the Nepal Himalaya has resulted in climate changes leading towards aridity and loss of organic topsoil. Each year the monsoon rains wash away more than 12 tonnes of soil from every acre of the hill side. In the worst areas 80 tonnes of soil are ripped from each acre (Lean, 1983). In the hills and mountains of Nepal, farmers keep animals for manure to maintain the fertility of the soil and for extra income to keep pace with the increasing demands for the basic necessities. Huge quantities of vegetation are consumed by the livestock, either roaming in the forest area or stall fed in the villages. Goats, cows, yaks, sheep and oxen are usually herded throughout the year over the slopes of the barren hills and the animals consume whatever they can find. In the Nepal Himalaya, it is estimated that cattle over graze the land by factor of nine, tearing up grass, crippling trees and eating seedlings before they can grow (Lean 1983). During the dry season (May to June) burning of forests and grassland is commonly used (Bajracharya 1983: 237) to stimulate early growth of grass for animals to graze. This is a devastating practice because it removes most of the mulch and exposes the soil to erosion.

The process of soil erosion in turn has lead to sheet and gully erosion, land slides and flood hazards. The effects are the permanent lowering of soil productivity with a high degree of instability and frequent crop failure, changing the hydrological cycle by increasing runoff, reducing the water retaining capacity of the soil and increasing the silt load in the river beds along the valley and plain areas (Shrestha 1983: 97-99). The incidence of flooding of swollen rivers flowing down from the hills has been increasing every year. It has been observed that some of the river beds in the Tarai are rising from 15 to 30 cm every year (Rana 1976: 115). This, in turn, has resulted in serious damage to the lives and fertile agricultural lands in the Tarai plain. During the third week of July, 1993, heavy downpour severely hit most of the districts of Nepal causing landslides, devastative floods, and untold misery. The severely affected districts were Sarlahi, Makawanpur, Rauthat and Chitwan. By September 10, 1993, about 1,157 persons died along with 67,374 families and 428,851 persons being affected by the floods. Similarly, 15,029 houses were completely destroyed, 18,565 were partially damaged and 36,929 hectares of agricultural land were seriously affected or damaged by the devastating floods. According to the press release of the Home Ministry, HMG/N, by September 10, 1993, it was estimated that the century's worst flash flood altogether damaged property worth 4.87 billion rupees (International Forum, 1993: 3).

Similarly, construction of roads, intrusion of development, industrial activities and tourism have negatively impacted the mountain ecosystem (Gurung, 1982 b: 17). In the historical past, there were some traditional iron

and copper mining and smelting industries in the hills of Nepal. But those activities have been dead now for the last few generations because of the shortage of fuel resources. While those mining industries were in operation, they were responsible for soil erosion and landslides and at the same time, heavy destruction of forest resources for making wood and charcoal for fuel purposes. As the traditional industries closed down, the employees had no alternative jobs, so they started shifting cultivation in the high altitude mountains, and over-grazing of cattle and sheep inside the forest area (Acharya 1976: 73). The introduction of an intensive carpet industry in the Solu Valley (eastern Nepal Himalaya) implied even more dramatic consequences. The dying process of wool requires a lot of firewood. This led to a wide destruction of forests near the settlements within less than 15 years (Schild 1976: 8). These processes of rural industrial activities have further led to the deterioration of mountain environment. In the marginal environments and low levels of cultural development, people usually derive their livelihood directly from nature. As a result, every economic effort of man may have environmental impact of significant magnitude. Even a small effect of economic activities on the environment may have far-reaching implications in the local ecology, owing to marginal conditions (Shrestha and Manandhar 1977: 8).

In recent years, the soaring number of tourists and mountaineers in Nepal is damaging the ecology of the Himalayas (Shrestha 1976; Shrestha 1989; Sharma 1989; Shah 1990; Bajracharya 1990). The heavy influx of mountaineers and trekkers along the upper slopes of the Himalayas have created a booming trade of firewood for local villagers, and they are depleting forests in ecologically fragile and sensitive areas. Due to the heavy flow of trekkers and mountaineers, especially in the Everest region (eastern Nepal Himalaya), the forest cover has been decreasing at an alarming rate. In almost all the trekking routes, it is found that the camping sites are left unclean. Frequently used camping sites are becoming very unhygienic because of human and mule excrement, unburnt pieces of wood, ash and garbage. These practices have led to pollution and deterioration of the Himalayan paradise (Shrestha 1976: 89).

The unscientific alignment and construction of roads along the geologically weak and unstable slopes of the hills and mountains have resulted in numerous land slides and serious soil erosion (Tautsher 1974: 9). It is estimated that the sediment load from road cutting in the Himalayas is as high as $8,000 \text{ m}^3/\text{km}$ (Sharma 1987). Likewise, according to another report, as much as 1.99 tonnes of sediment are reported to be generated per annum by each 10 metres of road in the Himalayas (Chadha 1989: 17). The debris slowly find their way into the streams and rivers, increasing their sediment

load. Thus, it can be said that the major sources of sediment due to human activities are landslides which develop due to unscientific alignment and construction of roads.

Furthermore, the demographic pressure in the hills has caused more and more marginal areas to be brought under cultivation to feed the ever-growing population. The decreasing forest areas have discouraged the villagers from collecting more fodder, which has led to lower rates of manure application on agricultural lands. Thus the agricultural productivity has declined steadily, whereas the population is increasing at an alarming rate. This process has generated more demand for cultivable land, and the forest areas have been further reduced. All of this has led to the creation of a vicious circle. This circle is of course accelerated by a growing population and greater aggregate demand for arable land (Blaikie et al., 1982: 214). Thus, it is obvious that accelerated environmental degradation over the Nepal Himalaya is due to several combinations of interrelated and complex factors, of which population pressure in the limited land resource cannot be overlooked.

Some Efforts to Solve the Problems

In recent years, the problems and consequences of environmental degradation in the Nepal Himalaya have become a matter of serious concern. Restoration of the deteriorating environment has become a great challenge to Nepal. To overcome the problems, several plans, policies and programmes have been implemented in the country. His Majesty's Government (HMG) of Nepal created the Department of Soil and Water Conservation (DSWC) under the Ministry of Forest in 1974. It was renamed as the Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management (DSCWM) in 1980. The Ministry of Forests has also been renamed as the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation in 1981 (Joshi 1984: 398). The ministry was again renamed as the Ministry of Forest and Environment after the restoration of democracy in Nepal, and recently the name has been changed to the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation. In October, 1992, the Environmental Protection Council was established under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister. This high-level policy body has a broad mandate that includes policy formulation, planning and coordination among line agencies and programmes related to environment.

After the establishment of DSWC, systematic efforts and approaches were initiated to conserve the soil and water resources of Nepal. Keeping in view the UNESCO's effort to overcome the man-environment problems of the biosphere, the Nepal Man and Biosphere (MAB) Committee came into existence in 1974. The Nepal MAB Committee's main objective is to overcome the deteriorating environment caused by human activities in the

course of socioeconomic development. In May 1974, HMG/Nepal formed a Task Force Committee on land use and erosion control. The committee prepared and submitted a report on 'Landuse and Erosion Control' in 1974 (National Planning Commission, 1974). The Task Force Committee adopted a sound and rational policy on land use and erosion control for the then forthcoming Fifth Plan (1975-1980). During the Fifth Plan period several programmes and projects were carried out to conserve the environment. Among the main programmes and activities were tree plantation, gully control, landslide stabilisation, trail improvement, and terracing. The Sixth Plan (1980-1985) and the Seventh Plan (1985-1990) have set separate policies on environment and landuse to be carried out during the plan period. Both plans have emphasized horticultural development, afforestation, resettlement, soil and water conservation, environmental education and national park and wild life conservation. Likewise, the plan initiated and framed national policies for environment to overcome the environmental and landuse problems faced by Nepal (National Planning Commission 1980, 1985).

Environmental protection and management considerations have been mentioned for the first time in the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990. This can be regarded as an important obligation of the state and can be taken as a milestone in the history of environmental protection in Nepal. During the Earth Summit held at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 1992, Nepal expressed her commitment to the conservation of the environment and its resources. The Eighth Plan (1992-1997) adopts some basic policies to restore the deteriorating environment of Nepal. The plan emphasises assessing environmental impact while formulating projects, minimising negative impact on the environment at the planning stage for large-scale physical and industrial development, making detailed legal provisions for sustainability to facilitate environmental management, identifying norms related to pollution, arousing awareness of the people regarding environment through the involvement of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), preparing plans to execute and check environmental degradation at the tourist destinations, and determining the causes of pollution in polluted areas to introduce management plans for pollution control (National Planning Commission, 1992: 616-17).

The Department of Soil Conservation (previously known as the Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management) is concentrating its efforts to restore the deteriorating environment in collaboration with international agencies like USAID, FAO, UNDP, ADB, as well as the Governments of Switzerland, Germany, United Kingdom and Canada. The international agencies and various governments are cooperating with His Majesty's

Government of Nepal with financial aid, loans and technical assistance to combat against the deterioration of the mountain ecosystem of Nepal.

Furthermore, the establishment of the National Committee for Man and Biosphere (MAB), the implementation of national parks and wildlife preservation schemes in various geographic regions of the country, the establishment of the 'King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation' and the recently established high level 'Environmental Protection Council' will certainly play important roles in preserving the fragile mountain environment of Nepal. In the meantime, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) was established in Kathmandu in 1983 under HMG/Nepal's agreement with UNESCO and the sponsorship of Germany and Switzerland. The centre has been concentrating its efforts in countries along the Hindu Kush Himalayas, which include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan, in preserving the environment and undertaking sustainable development without ecological destruction. Though various efforts have been made in various fields to restore the deteriorating mountain and hill environment in Nepal, much more remains to be done. Mass participation in preserving the environment is of utmost importance at the village level. This can be achieved through environmental education, but at present, this is lacking in the country.

Concluding Remarks

Ecological degradation in the Nepal Himalaya has become a grave concern in context of sustained and balanced development of the country. The main problem in this context seems to be the increasing amount of soil erosion, landslides and flood hazards as a result of forest destruction due to increasing human intervention. This situation has come about in Nepal because of increasing demands to meet the basic needs of the fast growing mountain and hill people for firewood and extension of agricultural land in marginal areas. Rapid deforestation leads to landslides, soil erosion and loss of precious top soil containing most of the nutrient on which plant and animal life depend. Nowadays indiscriminate felling of trees in the forests is taking place everywhere in the Himalayas. Deforestation in the Himalayas has ultimately led to adverse effect on the delicately balanced ecosystem of both the Himalayas and the plains in the form of soil erosion, landslides, debris deposition, flood hazards, siltation and drying up of springs. This has indirectly led to the migration of the people from the Himalayas. The twin effects of deforestation seem to be adversely influencing the productivity of agricultural land and the stability of the mountain and hill ecosystem of Nepal (Shrestha and Sharma 1980: 52). Furthermore, the precarious ecology of the Nepalese hills cannot be improved without first tackling the economic

poverty of the people (Gurung, 1981: 10). To overcome the problems of poverty faced by the hilly people, greater opportunities to earn a living outside agriculture should be made and much emphasis should be laid on the use of alternative energy to relieve the pressure on forest for fuel wood (RECAST 1981).

For regeneration of the dwindling forests, massive afforestation programmes in the barren hills should be made on a war footing. Afforestation programmes should also be undertaken in the watershed areas of large hydropower plants and irrigation projects, as well as along river banks. At the same time, one should realize that regeneration of forests would be impossible unless open grazing and over grazing is stopped. Regeneration of the dwindling forests in Nepal is a great and challenging task that the government alone may not be able to carry out without the active cooperation and participation of the local people. This requires that the people realize that they have a close relationship with the forest resources on which they depend for their living.

While formulating plans and implementing development projects like construction of roads, irrigation canals and hydro power dams in the mountain and hill areas, the government should seriously concentrate on probable environmental consequences and should emphasize sustainable development and development without destruction. Moreover, demographic pressure upon the resources is the main cause for deterioration of the Himalayan ecosystem. Thus, it is quite obvious that uncontrolled growth of population should be timely checked through different measures and at the same time the rural people should be made aware of the population explosion and its consequences to the environment which may ultimately affect their own existence. For proper and rational use of resources and comprehensive development of the hills and mountains, the deterioration of environmental conditions should be prevented through proper watershed conservation and management of different rivers by adopting appropriate landuse measures based on conservation oriented policies by discouraging the unwise and wasteful use of land resources. At the same time, effective resource conservation and management policies should be adopted by involving local people for arresting the problems of environmental degradation in the Nepal Himalaya (Shrestha, 1986: 269).

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MONETARY APPROACH TO MACROECONOMIC STUDY FOR NEPAL

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The Data Base

The economic performance of Nepal is governed by many diverse factors interconnected by means of natural, human and economic forces (Sharma, 1984). Research studies are invariably confronted with questions of choice between alternative paradigms, empirical models, analytical frameworks and quantitative techniques. The most serious of all the problems in research on Nepal, however, is the lack of dependable time series data, even on such key macroeconomic variables as national consumption, savings and investment.

Momentarily, the lack of required data has been mainly due to a poor system of data reporting and time series construction. On the one hand, while the data reporting system seems to be confronted with many chances of being at its rudimentary state¹, where by series are distorted and broken, a frequent change in variable definition, on the other hand, is another common practice usually followed in compilation of data. Basically the latter is the problem in Nepal, causing information contents of various sources to be significantly different. As a result, questions are naturally posed not only on the quality of data as such, but also on the results of studies, differing in their nature and basis. From this no consistent and comparable interpretation can be obtained.²

However, of all the available data from various sources, the figures for monetary, budgetary, GDP and balance of payments accounts seem more accurate. Present study has consequently made a modest attempt to utilize such information. But still the immunization of the study from other theoretical and general type diseases may not be possible. These flaws make their presence felt in the estimation of relationships themselves, in the form of spurious correlation, multicollinearity and serial correlation. The specification bias may even cause more damaging effect on results when little scope is left for the inclusion of more variables owing to the multicollinearity problem.

In a country like Nepal market forces typically are not only disorganized, but also distorted by the government's frequent interventions. The low degree of monetization is yet another problem that may handicap the economy in its smooth operation. These all, furthermore, make model specification a difficult problem.

Given these limitations, a research study must bear with the constraints presented by the poor data, which may adversely effect the efficiency of the study. The present paper, with due consideration of these difficulties, has attempted to initiate the macroeconomic approach very cautiously so that the results obtained for an analysis of monetary phenomena in Nepal may be made more reliable and consistent.

As the work is motivated with an object of shaping monetary policy for growth and stability, we first try to build some postulates in which the study may be founded.

Mechanism of Monetary Adjustment

The monetary sector in Nepal has backward linkage with the foreign sector (Pant, 1983 and McNown, 1980) and a forward linkage with the domestic sector (Pradhan, 1977). The former implies that the degree of foreign penetration into the monetary sector through a change in source of reserve money is very strong, whereas the latter justifies changes on domestic variables such as the level of prices and aggregate demand in order to directly affect the money supply (M^S).

There are two primary causes for a direct transmission of monetary impulses: one, that the elasticity of real demand for money with respect to real GDP (gross domestic product) is unity (Pant, 1983), and second, that the organised and developed market for money and capital is so small that its working through interest rate changes, which is the keystone of Keynesian theory, is strictly limited (Sharma, 1978).

More precisely, monetary developments in Nepal are closely associated, and have a direct link, with the commodity market, as presumed by Robertson's loanable fund theory (Tsiang, 1980). However, not both, and obviously all when M^2 (currency in circulation plus demand deposit plus time and savings deposit held by public with banks) is considered, the components of money supply extend homogenous effect – technically as well as functionally – to the level of activities in this sequence.³ When the currency (C) component of M^S is mostly a demand determined variable and has a one-way causal link with income, the other component of money, the demand deposit (D_1), has a double-sided relation, or causal link, with the level of aggregate demand, namely the gross domestic product. The behaviour of savings and time

deposits differs to even a greater degree in light of the interest they earn (Schulz, 1978).

Despite the fact that money has such a decisive link in the Nepalese economy, the open border with India⁴ and excessive dependence on foreign assistance reduces the scope for the effective use of domestic policy measures of monetary adjustment for achieving goals such as internal vis-a-vis external stability (Fry, 1974, Kafle, 1980 and Shah, 1981). A dominant foreign sector, in this regard, adds fuel to the fire by mitigating further the efficacy of such policy measures.

Against this background, the method employed for a study of the Nepalese monetary sector will be considered.

Method of Study

The model developed for this study is aggregative, partial and restrictive. Because of the non-availability of appropriate data on certain key variables like savings and investment in Nepal, we follow the so called 'Third-Way' approach to monetary analysis (Friedman, 1971) as developed by the present day proponents of 'monetarism'. Under the leadership of Milton Friedman many studies on sensitive monetary issues have been undertaken, without making a separation between nominal and real values.

Nevertheless, the present study has an additional property in its attempt to specify price identity, and it has tried to estimate the savings function in real terms (financial savings, in the absence of other indices, deflated by consumer price index) to understand behavioural relationships among variables in monetary as well as real sectors.

The proposed model examines the influence of prices in India on the demand for imports in Nepal, the link between monetary and fiscal policy, and the habit persistence in income holders. Also, the model has taken the monetary behaviour of public, banks and authorities into account, is an imprint of models⁵ for UK (Crouch, 1967) and Singapore (Wong, 1974) and bears strong affinity to models for Venezuela (Khan, 1974), Germany (Wilims, 1971) and other countries with features similar to Nepal, representing both the economic affluence and poor performance.

The study, however, assumes an equilibrium condition in markets for all the endogenous as well as exogenous variables. Specifications for most of the relationships are, nonetheless, in log linear form, the benefit of which is immense for the interpretation of coefficients. This type of specification also reduces the problem of heteroscedasticity (Walters, 1966).

For institutional or other reasons, variables like exports (X), government spending (GE), net international capital flow (official, OKN plus others, KOBPN), rate of interest (as proxied by rate on one year fixed account, r_{12}),

net transfer payments (TAN), net receipts from services (SAN), Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB: established as a central bank in 1956) credit to commercial banks (CCB), net official reserves (ORN), prices outside Nepal (IP: as proxied by Indian wholesale price index) and fiscal deficit of the government (FD) are assumed as exogenous.

More uniquely, the relative prices and foreign exchange rates have been intentionally ignored in the study. There are certain logically consistent reasons for doing it. On one hand, the economy of Nepal is not capable of influencing price ratio in the world commodity market due to its small size, primitive technology, dominant foreign sector and land locked geography, the higher import to GDP ratio (more than fifteen percent). On the other hand, the economy is kept weak in terms of efforts for trade regulations through price and exchange rate changes. These are the genuine reasons for the Nepalese economy's lack of a dynamic character.

Above all, as the economy of Nepal has to operate with limited sovereignty, there is every chance that it is much more dictated by foreign shocks and disturbances. The significance of a study on inter-sectoral relationships in this situation is some how impaired and the predictive power of a model too is undermined. This means that models for the economy as a whole in Nepal should remain incomplete, restrictive and less efficient, unless the degrees of openness is lowered enough.

Despite these limitations, a system of structural equations has been specified,⁶ and estimated empirically by applying the Ordinary Least Square technique. The application of OLS method may, of course, produce biased results; but in view of the smallness of the sample size, use of this technique is justified. Results continue to be biased even if some other more refined methods are applied (Gujarati, 1978 and Koutsoyiannis, 1978).

For estimation purpose, the study uses secondary data collected from various internal and international sources, inclusive of the NRB, CEDA, National Planning Commission, Central Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Finance, the IMF (International Financial Statistics) and other authentic sources in the form of books and articles. Mid-July figures have remained as the basis for studying monetary variables.

Inter-sectoral Monetary Relationship: A System of Structural Equations

Earlier, it was made clear how the Nepalese economic structure differs fundamentally from those of other countries in terms of its lack of dynamic

character. In view of this and the problem of time series data, an attempt is made to propose for several structural hypotheses in this section. The verification is presented Table 1.

Flow of Money Income or Aggregate Demand (GDP)

Gross domestic product in Nepal represents the domestic level of transactions for which money is used. It is explained by money supply ($M = C + D_1$) and its own previous year's value. But since the currency component of M^s has little to do with the determination of income, it is the demand deposit component (held mostly by business and industrial undertakings) of M^s , instead of total, that should be used as an explanatory variable. When lagged value of GDP itself also appears as an explanatory variable for examining the speed of adjustment between actual and expected values, the estimating equation is

$$\log \text{GDP}_t = F_1 \left(\log \frac{(+)}{D_1^s} - 1, \log \frac{(+)}{\text{GDP}_{t-1}} \right) \quad (4.1)$$

where t and $t-1$ refer the current and one-year lagged values respectively.

This is an autoregressive function which follows the distributed lag adjustment process with a geometrically declining lag coefficient of Koyck type.

Demand for Imports (IM)

In the present situation Nepal is fully dependent upon imported goods even for meeting daily needs (Poudyal, 1982). As a consequence, increase in income mainly leads to an import of goods from abroad. The side effect is a formation of public taste for foreign goods. This further means that world price is a weaker factor for explaining demand for Nepalese imports, given the prevailing situation of the country's underdevelopment. Therefore, to test all these propositions the equation that has to be fitted is

$$\log \text{IM}_t = F_2 \left(\log \frac{(+)}{\text{GDP}_t}, \log \frac{(-)}{\text{IP}_t}, \log \frac{(+)}{\text{IM}_{t-1}} \right) \quad (4.2)$$

where IP is Indian Wholesale Price Index, a proxy for world price.

This function in particular helps in deriving conclusions regarding a better response of imports (in terms of elasticity) to either of the explanatory variables and the time period for the adjustment between expected and actual values. It has got the same property as equation 4.1 in regard to the presence of adaptive expectations.

The Supply of Reserve Money⁷

There are numerous sources through which both the foreign and domestic sectors of the economy exert influences on the stock of reserve money, a

source of money supply changes. While the foreign sector has an effect through the foreign exchange reserves and official reserves, the domestic influences are extended through a claim and non-monetary liabilities of monetary authorities. But since the purpose of this study is to determine the scope of domestic policy measures for monetary regulation, the function fitted is

$$\log RM_t = F_3 (\log^{(+)} NFAM_t, \log^{(+)} FD_t, \log^{(+)} CCB_t) \quad (4.3)$$

where NFAM and FD stand for net foreign assets with monetary authorities, and fiscal deficit of the government respectively.

This is a behavioural function similar, but not exactly similar to that of Ahluwalia (1979).⁸ It observes the relative strength of the foreign and government sectors in determining the source of money stock changes. It also examines a pertinent monetary issue that whether or not the NRB, acting as a bankers' bank, is really capable of offsetting foreign and government *budgetary effects on money supply changes* and controlling money thereof.

Bank Behavior Equation

It is a well established rule that banks are unable to create money (secondary) unless they acquired more reserves in the form of primary deposits (primary money). This means that RM is essential for increasing the size of banks through changes in secondary money, a product of credit expansion by banks. If D_1^S (supply of demand deposit) is found to be a highly stable function of RM, the policy for controlling money is more effective. Consequently the function presumed is

$$\log D_{1t}^S = F_4 (\log^{(+)} RM_t) \quad (4.4)$$

where the coefficient of RM is the marginal demand deposit multiplier with respect to RM.

The choice of RM instead of the adjusted figure is based on the ground that Nepalese commercial banks have always been loaded with liquidity, and our working assumption is also that elasticity of demand for currency with respect to income is around unity.

The function, however, would be estimated for a period after 1966 when the NRB was given powers to function as a Controller of Credit, even though its establishment was long back in 1956.

Demand for Currency

Uniquely, income demand for currency in Nepal is expected to be very high. This is attributed to the underdeveloped nature of the economy. Holding that

currency is an income determined variable and is not a perfect substitute for D_1 , and also assuming that actual demand for currency is not adjusted to desired level instantaneously, the function fitted is

$$\log C_t^D = F_5 (\log {}^{(+)}GDP_t \log C_{t-1}^{(+)}) \quad (4.5)$$

This is a short term demand function for currency with an involvement of lag adjustment process of Koyck type. It is also an autoregressive function of the type for imports, or income, in equation 4.1.

Demand for Financial Savings

Financial savings in Nepal may be approximated by interest bearing assets like savings (SD) and time (TD) deposits for the reason that the banking sector has assumed a predominant place in the financial structure. The propensity to save, however, is determined by an increase in income in real terms owing to the subsistence nature of economy. At the same time, since income effect on consumption is expected to be very high when prices are rising fast, it is not possible to save more of income even if the reward for savings is sufficiently high unless income in real terms increases faster. To take all these factors into account, the function is specified as

$$\log (D_{2t}^D/P_t) = F_6 (\log {}^{(+)}GDP_t/P_t), \log r_{12t}^{(+)} \quad (4.6)$$

This equation takes financial savings in real terms on account of the fact that the saving is a sacrifice of real consumption. It is also consistent with the NRB policy for resource mobilization with which the growing deficit in government budget and the investment requirement of the economy could be easily met.

One of the important features of this function is that it holds the view that the variation in income, the rate of interest and prices are helpful in regulating investment demand in the long term, for banks have the unique feature that they always borrow for lending purpose. Given that r_{12} is a *policy variable*, the best means to control investment demand is to control the money market, the equilibrium condition which determines the level of prices.

In addition to these behavioral equations a few more identities are required to help close the system of equations.

$$NFAM_t = X_t - IM_t + SAN_t + TAN_t + KOBPN_t + OKN_t + ORN_t \quad (4.7)$$

$$M_{1t} = C_t + D_{1t} \quad (4.8)$$

$$P_t = M_1/(M_1/P)_t \cdot 100 \quad (4.9)$$

While equation 4.7 depicts the degree of openness of Nepalese economy, equation 4.8 measures narrowly defined money supply. Equation 4.9 explains prices in Nepal determined at an equilibrium level where supply of money is

equated with the demand for it. Prices in this equation are expressed, however, in terms of nominal (equilibrium) quantity of money divided by real quantity times one hundred (for a detailed account see *Ahluwalia, 1979*). It also assumes that money is simply a means of exchange.

Pooling all the equations and arranging them in some order provides a model of the Nepalese monetary sector, which may, in a sense of arrangement, be recursive⁹.

$$\log \text{GDP}_t = F_1 (\log D_{1t}^S, \log \text{GDP}_{t-1}) \quad (4.1)$$

$$\log \text{IM}_t = F_2 (\log \text{GDP}_t; \log \text{IP}_t, \log \text{IM}_{t-1}) \quad (4.2)$$

$$\log \text{RM}_t = F_3 (\log \text{NFAM}_t, \log \text{FD}_t, \log \text{CCB}_t) \quad (4.3)$$

$$\log D_{1t}^S = F_4 (\log \text{RM}_t) \quad (4.4)$$

$$\log C_t^D = F_5 (\log \text{GDP}_t, \log C_{t-1}^D) \quad (4.5)$$

$$\log (D_{2t}^D/P_t) = F_6 (\log (\text{GDP}_t/P_t), \log r_{12t}) \quad (4.6)$$

$$\text{NFAM}_t = X_t - \text{IM}_t + \text{SAN}_t + \text{TAN}_t + \text{KOBPN}_t + \text{OKN}_t + \text{ORN}_t \quad (4.7)$$

$$\text{M}_{1t} = C_t + D_{1t} \quad (4.8)$$

$$P_1 = \text{M}_{1t}/(\text{M}_1/P_t \cdot 100) \quad (4.9)$$

The system is complete in that the nine endogenous variables are equal to the number of equations. The predetermined and exogenous variables in the system are fourteen.

In this system, while the final target of monetary policy is the level of income and price stability, the intermediate targets may be the equilibrium stock of RM, D_1 , C and D_2 . The RM may play a crucial role in the system by linking the domestic and foreign sectors. When changes in domestic stock of money are brought about by a change in RM through the regulation of exogenously determined policy variables, say, the FD and the CCB, the impact on RM of the foreign sector is realized through the IM function, which in itself is endogenously determined by the level of income.

The predetermined and non-policy exogenous variables in the system are: D_{1t-1}^S , GDP_{t-1} , IP_t , IM_{t-1} , X_t , SAN_t , TAN_t , KOBPN_t , ORN_t and OKN_t . The purpose for specifying D_2 as an endogenous variable is to observe the effect of interest, income and price changes on interest bearing assets which, in turn, affect the level of income through the investment channel (implicit postulate of the model). This channel, however, is developed to the assumption that banks pay the rate of interest to their deposit holders in expectation of more returns from loans and investment.

The Estimate

When hypotheses as built earlier were tested with Nepalese data for different periods, they were found logically consistent, supporting our arguments for macroeconomic adjustment in the monetary sector in Nepal. Results are given in table 1.

Almost all the coefficients of independent variables, except that of IP_t in the import demand function, have been found significant at levels below ten percent. R^2 s and R^2 (s = Squares) too are satisfactory and show a high variation in the dependent variable explained by the model. This implies that model's fit is as good as expected.

The D-W statistic also does not show a serious problem of autocorrelation in error terms. Even though some of the D-Ws do not lie within the acceptance region, they fall into the indecision region.

Estimate for an aggregate demand function exhibits that the long-term elasticity of GDP with respect to the one-year lagged value of demand deposit is 0.71, and the speed of adjustment between the actual and expected values of GDP is forty-one percent within the same year.

Similarly, the regression result for the import function shows that Nepal has a high elasticity of imports with respect to income. Speed of adjustment between actual and expected values of imports is fifty percent within a year.

The world price as proxied by the Indian wholesale price to explain imports in Nepal has remained weaker compared to the income variable, although it carries the expected sign. This strongly supports our hypothesis that the prevailing compulsion for imports is such that prices in the world market have only a little to do with regulation of imports in Nepal.

The result for RM function makes clear of the fact that the role of external sources of money supply compared to domestic sources in Nepal is still dominant. The elasticity of RM with respect to NFAM is 0.49. However, in terms of significance, domestic sources too are equally competent. Both of the coefficients for FD and CCB demonstrate that responses of RM to the growing fiscal deficit of the government and commercial banks' borrowing from the central bank are so high as to conclude for a greater possibility of effective monetary regulations.

The last argument for monetary policy prescription may further be supplemented with an estimate of D_1^S function. When the constant elasticity of D_1^S with respect to RM is equal to unity, the R^2 is as high as 0.99. This result, of course, strongly supports our previous argument that long-term income elasticity of demand for currency in Nepal should be around unity for which excess supply of RM results in holding bank assets.

The estimate of C^D function also reveals that it is realistic to expect for such a unitary income elasticity coefficient. It is 1.3, which is approximately unity.

Finally, the estimate of the D_2^D/P function holds clearly that financial savings in real terms in Nepal is highly responsive to variations in income, also in real terms, and the reward for savings, namely the rate of interest paid on deposits. This leads to an important generalization that monetary policy working through interest rate, income and price changes in Nepal may be used to tackle the resource gap problem and regulate the aggregate demand, including investment spending.

Conclusion

Since the previous year's money (i.e., one component) determines this year's level of income, which in turn affects the demand for demand deposit in this year, market equilibrium for demand deposit is automatically established, with an interval of time. Therefore, given the demand for currency as a stable and unitary function of income, any attempt for controlling demand deposit through the regulation of RM reshuffles the operation of the Nepali economy as a whole, including imports and financial savings.

Paradoxically, since the size of the foreign sector in Nepal is as big (not less than twenty percent of GDP, because only trade- $X + IM$ - to GDP ratio is something near twenty percent) as to yield a volatile effect for the domestic economy, the situation is not as simple as to conclude on the policy matter just cited. In the main, the foreign sector in Nepal is used to transmit the consequences of the foreign origin to the domestic economy through the monetary sector, the ultimate pressure and the feedback effect of which would be on the foreign exchange reserves held by the monetary authorities. Therefore, a reliable use of monetary policy in Nepal, under this situation, is certainly questioned.

For the above reasons, it may be held that a scientific credit or monetary planning in Nepal for realizing ultimate policy goals, including internal vis-a-vis external stability, can be initiated only when the economy is fully prepared for internal regulations. In this regard, a phased programme for self-reliance and a firm policy for import substitution/restriction is essential. More than that, a strict regulation on the freedom of movement of people and goods from Big India into Small Nepal is required.

Table 1: Regression Coefficients of Independent Variables

S.No.	Period Covered	Form of Estimate	Dependent variable	Independent Variables	Intercept	SEE	F-Value	R ²	R ²	D-W	Durbin's h
1.	1965-80	log linear	GDP _t	$\frac{S}{D_{t-1}}$ GDP _{t-1}	0.87	0.035	198.8	0.966	0.968	2.42	-1.47
				0.294 0.584	(2.09)**						
				(1.97)** (2.84)*							
2.	1965-80	log linear	IM _t	GDP _t IP _t IM _{t-1}	-1.57	0.083	50.13	0.915	0.926	2.58	-2.007
				1.377 -0.761 0.558	(-2.85)*						
				(2.06)** (-0.98) (2.72)*							
3.	1965-80	log linear	RM _t	NFAM _t FD _t CCB _t	0.559	0.049	122.34	0.963	0.968	1.70	-
				0.492 0.238 0.105	(4.27)*						
				(5.12)* (3.6)* (5.43)*							
4.	1969-82	log linear	$\frac{S}{D_{1t}}$	RM _t	0.682	0.033	858.69	-	0.986	1.595	-
				1.117	(8.38)						
				(29.3)*							
5.	1965-80	log linear	$\frac{D}{C_t}$	GDP _t $\frac{D}{C_{t-1}}$	-0.534	0.028	563.94	0.987	0.988	2.30	-1.190
				0.345 0.734	(-1.04)*						
				(1.38)*** (3.39)*							
6.	1964-80	log linear	$\frac{D}{D_{2t}/P_t}$	GDP _t /P _t $\frac{r_{12t}}$	-12.28	0.16	57.97	0.885	0.892	1.27	-
				4.41 1.20	(-2.58)**						
				(2.47)** (3.2)*							

Note: t-values below coefficients in parentheses

* Significant at 0.01 level

** Significant at 0.10 level and

*** Significant at 0.15 level.

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Notes

1. Chances of over and under reporting of data are more in the context of the low literacy percentage (expected to be below thirty percent) among respondents and the higher inefficiency in administration.
2. For a detailed account of this rudimentary nature of the data system and its possible implication for consistent research see Barkay, 1982 and Sharma, 1984.
3. For a theoretical discussion, see Smith, 1975 and Crouch, 1967.
4. Because the border is open, Indian inflation enters Nepal without restriction. The Nepal Rastra Bank admits this fact in the following statement: "Steady increase in the Indian wholesale price index..... installed a considerable pressure on domestic price level this year" (NRB. 1979/80 P.24).
5. This paper draws on these models for the reason that the nature of the **economy of Nepal resembles that of these countries to the extent of openness** (with a dominant foreign sector, only trade accounting for around twenty percent of GDP in Nepal) and smallness features. This type of small vis-a-vis strong open economy is rarely found in neighbouring countries.
6. The study while specifying equations preconceives that either demand for or the supply of the variables in the equation adjusts to its market situation. For this reason, it may appear that some of the variables like demand deposits (D_1) and the currency (C) held by the public are dealt with from the two different market sides, supply and demand. This differential treatment of D_1 and C is necessary for policy analysis in that it may help in visualizing the possibility of the regulation of bank behaviour through policy instruments, say, the changes in autonomous sources of reserve money (RM). On the other hand, the C component of money supply, although is a 'primary money', is presumed here mainly as a reflection of public behaviour which in Nepal is expected to be governed primarily by the level of income.
7. Since the economy of Nepal is open, it is quite logical to regard balance of payments (BP_S), RM and M^S , as the endogenously determined variables.
8. The functional form of the Ahluwalia equation is $DMB=F(DF, FR_{t-1})$, where DMB , DF and FR stand for change in base money, government fiscal deficit and foreign assets reserves with Reserve Bank of India respectively.
9. The system is recursive under the assumption that "transformed equations are themselves, in fact, original equations whose contemporary and past disturbances can be assumed not to be correlated" (Croouch, 1967, P. 410).

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TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN MUSTANG, NEPAL

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In November 1990 Nepal got a new constitution which reinstated the system of multiparty democracy, absent since 1960. It was hoped that the introduction of multiparty democracy would solve the country's political and economic problems. The process, however, has been more painful than expected.

To take root and become a sustainable democracy cannot merely be copied from the West, but would have to be based as much as possible on democratic elements of indigenous systems. Unfortunately, little is known about Nepal's traditional, local political systems¹. The present article tries to close this gap in detail by examining the traditional political system of Syang village of Mustang district².

The Thak Khola Valley

The Thak Khola valley is situated in the southern part of Mustang district, Nepal. The altitude of the 30 km long valley inclines from 1,900 m in the south to 2,700 m in the north. Thak Khola is surrounded by some of the world's highest mountains, including Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) and Annapurna (8,078 m). The Kali Gandaki river, which rises in the mountains on the border with Tibet, enters from the north and flows through the valley.

In Thak Khola winters are long and cold, and summers are short and warm. The climate and the vegetation vary according to the altitude. Due to minimal rainfall and high evaporation caused by strong winds, the northern part has a semi-desert vegetation; on the mountain sides where rain is higher are forests with pine, fir, birch, rhododendron, juniper and cypress. In the south rainfall is more than twice as high as in the north, and rich forests with coniferous and deciduous trees are found close to the villages.

The Thak Khola valley is ecologically a transit zone between the arid Tibetan plateau in the north and the Nepalese hills in the south, and for centuries it has been an important entrepot in the exchange of Tibetan salt and Nepalese foodgrains. Throughout history neighbouring powers have

sought to become overlords over this strategically important area in order to control and exploit the lucrative trade. In the 7th century the present Mustang district came under the supremacy of the Tibetan Yarlung dynasty. In the following centuries the area was controlled mainly by Tibetan rulers, but also by the powerful Jumla kingdom in Western Nepal. In the second half of the 18th century King Prithivinarayan Shah of Gorkha conquered the numerous small kingdoms which then comprised the present Nepal and since 1789 Thak Khola has been part of the Nepalese Kingdom³.

The villages are nuclear settlements situated near the bottom of the valley, usually where tributaries join the Kali Gandaki river. The biggest villages are Marpha, Tukche, Syang and Thini, some of which have more than 100 houses. An old caravan route which connects Tibet with the hills and plains further south runs through the valley, but the nearest motorable road is at Baglung, a three day walk to the south. A small airport is located at Jomsom providing several weekly flights to Pokhara and Kathmandu.

The northern part of Thak Khola between Jomsom and Cimang is known as Pacgau, and the southern part between Tukche and Ghassa is called Thaksatsae. For administrative purposes the valley is divided into six village development committees (formerly village panchayats), namely Thini-Jomsom, Marpha, Tukche, Kobang, Lete and Kunjo.

In 1977 there were approximately 942 households in the valley; 69 percent were Thakalis. Towa (that is people of Tibetan descent, mainly from Baragau north of Thak Khola) and occupation castes (tailors and blacksmiths) accounted for 11 percent each, while the rest were mainly Magars and Tanbetans (people of Tangbe, in northern Baragau).

The Thakalis number an estimated 9,000 persons⁴. Formerly, the distribution of Thakalis was limited to the Thak Khola valley, but nowadays only about 20 percent are found there – the majority live in towns and rural areas in the south.

The Thakalis comprise three separate endogamous groups – the Tamang Thakalis whose homeland is Thaksatsae; the Mhawa Thakalis who are the indigenous people of Marpha village; and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakalis who live in Thini, Syang and Cimang villages in Pacgau.

The economy of the Thakalis of Thak Khola is a mixture of subsistence and market economy. The household produces many of the goods it needs through agriculture, collecting, and husbandry. Most of the fields are found close to the villages and give two crops a year. The main crops are barley in winter and buckwheat and maize in summer. Almost all the fields of Pacgau are irrigated and give a higher yield than in Thaksatsae where irrigation is limited.

No household is self-sufficient and therefore has to buy foodstuffs, clothes, footwear, cigarettes and other goods and services at the market. Households also need cash for paying taxes and school fees and to cover expenses for religious ceremonies, marriages and entertainment. The Thakalis make an income to cover these expenses through the sale of goods produced by the household (e.g. surplus grain and livestock products), local trade and business, business outside Thak Khola and (in the case of the poorer households) the sale of labour. During the last few decades cash incomes from animal husbandry and salt trade have declined while incomes from the sale of cash-crops (especially apples and vegetables) and hotel business have increased.

It is generally agreed that the aftermath of nearly forty years of development efforts in Nepal has been one of increasing poverty. The picture of the average hill peasant is an appalling one. The Thakalis of Thak Khola do not fit this image. Most enjoy a relatively high standard of living, and only a few have major problems making a living. Basic infrastructure has improved much in recent years, and most villages have electricity and potable water supply systems. School enrollment is very high – also among girls⁵.

Political System in Syang, Pacgau

Syang is situated on a plateau close to the Kali Gandaki river in the northern end of the Thak Khola valley. The land belonging to the village covers an area of approximately 85 km², most of which is mountainous but there are also fields, forests and pastures. The village borders Marpha in the southwest, Dangarhong (Baragau) in the north and Thini in the east. The border to Dangarhong runs along a mountain ridge while that to Thini mainly follows the Kali Gandaki river. The border to Marpha does not follow well-defined topographical features, but runs horizontally through the middle of a mountain side.

Civic rights and duties: In 1981 there were 111 households in Syang, out of which 101 were Syangtan; the remaining included 2 Thin, 2 Mhawa, 2 Towa and 4 untouchables.

The majority of the households were *dur*, that is a household which is represented in the village assembly. To obtain this status the head of the household must be a male Syangtan, aged between 16 and 61 with permanent residence in the village. The assembly may accord this status to non-Syangtan households owning land in the village, provided the household head fulfills the other conditions. One Mhawa, one Thin and one Towa household were admitted into the assembly after they had requested permission to use

the village pastures for their animals; the assembly decided if they wanted to enjoy the benefits of the village, they should also carry the duties.

Households which were not represented in the village assembly included those headed by a woman or a retiree, a household headed by a Mhawa lama who had established a monastery in Syang, and a Towa household which had settled in the village in the late 1970s. The untouchables are not eligible for a seat in the assembly.

A household's duties towards the village community vary according to its status. The *dur* are obliged to participate in assembly meetings, to carry the duty of headman, secretary, and village worker when required, and to participate in public works programmes. Other households participate only in public works programmes, and those headed by a retiree only if explicitly asked.

The establishment of new households is thus a matter which concerns not only family members, but also the village community. When a person establishes his own household, he usually informs the village headmen. Otherwise, he will be ordered to appear before them and asked about his status. If he swears that he has not established a new household, no further action will be taken.

Members of a new household are obliged to participate in public works programmes immediately after it has been established. However, the household head will first be admitted into the village assembly at a special meeting which takes place once every third year. The duty of social worker applies only after the household head has become an assembly member.

The village assembly: The village assembly meet at least twice a year. The main meeting takes place at the end of August.

The day before the meeting village criers announce the time and the venue. The meeting starts in the early morning and takes place in the courtyard of the village temple. Two village workers guard the entrance and admit only assembly members⁶. The doors are closed at the start of the meeting and the village workers note the names of absentees who are later fined.

The members of the village assembly are divided into two groups (*phacan* or *cho*), namely "the big group" (*phacan thyowa*) and "the small group" (*phacan cyangpa*). The former includes the clans *syngtan phopai*, *pasin thyowa phopai* and *pasin cyangpa phopai*, and the latter *sakar phopai*, *jhisin phopai*, *che phopai*, *san phopai* and *mhacya parpa phopai*⁷. The groups gather in separate rooms adjoining the courtyard.

First, each group elects a new headman from among the members of the other group. Members will propose and review various candidates. If a

consensus cannot be reached, the group agrees on two-three candidates and the members will each place a small stone at (the symbol of) their choice; the candidate who receives the most stones is elected.

Any assembly member may be elected headman⁸. The headman is typically in his 40s or 50s; he is a good speaker, a patient listener, honest, and helpful. His economic status is not important.

Next, they nominate a person from the other group for the post of secretary. The secretary should be able to read and write Nepali, and therefore teachers are often nominated.

After lunch the assembly meet in the courtyard for the plenary session. The headmen, the secretary, members of the village panchayat assembly (see below) and the meditors sit on a narrow platform along a wall, while ordinary members gather in the middle of the courtyard. A representative of *phacan thyowa* announces whom his group has elected headman from *phacan cyangpa*, and vice versa. The elder of the two becomes 'the senior headman' and the other 'the junior headman'.

The post of headman is time-consuming and considered a burden. Formerly, nominees could opt out by paying a fine, but in 1975 the assembly made it compulsory for nominees to serve. In 1977 a nominee tried to reject the nomination, and when this proved unsuccessful, he escaped under the pretext of going to the toilet. Some village workers found him hiding in his house, and he was brought back and installed as headman.

Next, the groups will announce their nominees for the post of secretary. To decide the senior headman draws lots and the one who is drawn becomes the secretary, while the other goes free.

Afterwards, the outgoing secretary presents the village accounts. He explains the incomes and expenditure incurred during the past year, using stones of different sizes symbolizing Rs 1,000, 100, 10, 1 and 0.5. Any assembly member is free to check the account book.

The main incomes are rent from fields and interest on money belonging to the village⁹. The rent on fields depends on size and quality, while the interest on village loan is 10 percent. The rates are lower than on the open market, and preference is given to villagers who have not held the village fields and money before (that is newly established households).

The assembly members retire at the age of 61. The member places one rupee and four paise, a ceremonial scarf and a bottle of beer in front of the senior headman and requests permission to retire. When this has been granted the retiree will serve beer to the assembly members who in turn will bless him by placing butter on his temple.

The change of headmen is a formal affair. The outgoing headmen take an oath by placing a head on a religious text and promising that they have not

done anything wrong during their tenure¹⁰. The headmen and the secretary then receive a ceremonial scarf, while the new headmen are presented a turban and the new secretary a ceremonial scarf. After the meeting the newly appointed officials walk in a procession to the senior headman's house. Villagers stop the procession and offer the new headmen drinks.

The village assembly also meet in the beginning of November. The main purpose of this meeting is to appoint new village workers (whose term of office starts at the next assembly meeting the following August).

Besides these two annual meetings, the assembly meet also on an ad hoc basis when the situation demands it – such as conflicts with neighbouring villages.

Every third year in August the village assembly holds a major meeting in the courtyard of the old, ruined temple on the outskirts of the village. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce new village rules, to admit new assembly members and to evaluate former office-holders.

The assembly first discuss the village laws. For this part of the meeting persons who have held public office since the previous meeting form one group, while other members are divided into three groups according to age, namely 15-29 years, 30-49 years and 50-61 years. Proposals for new rules and amendments to old ones are first discussed in the groups and later in a plenary session. If a consensus cannot be reached, the group of the office-holders will decide¹¹.

The admission of new assembly members is a simple affair; their names are recorded and they are not required to take an oath.

The assembly also evaluate the performance of the headmen and panchayat officials who have served in the past three years. For this purpose members divide into the two *phacan*. If one group finds that a former official has done something wrong, it will bring up the matter at the plenary session. If the matter is of minor importance, the assembly gives the former official a reprimand, but in case of misconduct and malpractice he will be fined: this happened a few years back to a vice-chairman of the local village panchayat.

As mentioned earlier, women are not eligible as members of the village assembly. However, since the early 1980s the local branch of the Nepal Women's Organisation has met at the same time as the assembly to discuss the affairs of the village. The women send proposals to the headmen which they want the assembly to consider. A ban on gambling (except for certain days) was introduced in this way.

The village administration: The administration of the village consists of the two headmen, the secretary and six village workers.

The headmen serve for a period of one year. They are usually not reelected beyond a second term, and in the past ten years more than a dozen villagers have served as headman. Their duties are to plan and supervise public works programmes and communal worship, and mediate and judge in disputes relating to civil law. During their term of office the headmen have absolute power within the village; an English-speaking informant referred to them as "dictators".

The duties of the secretary involve writing documents and letters, and keeping the village accounts.

The two *phacan* provide each three village workers. The post of village worker is time-consuming and the duty rotates among the *dur* according to a written schedule. New households are usually placed on the top of the list.

Households in need of male labour sometimes hire a person to carry the duty of village worker on their behalf. The job is usually taken by young men having only a few fields and animals and who need an extra income.

The village workers elect among themselves two person (*nerpa*) to collect fines and keep the village treasury box.

The village workers function as village watchmen. They look out for stray animals in the fields and control that nobody breaks the village rules, such as washing clothes at the public taps or bringing firewood back to the village after dark. They are also criers who walk through the village shouting aloud official announcements.

The headmen and the secretary receive a small remuneration from the village treasury¹², while the village workers are paid no salary. However, the village workers and the council members receive half of most of the fines which are collected; this income is pooled and spent on parties which they arrange two or three times a year.

The headmen and the village workers (but not the secretary) look after the operation and maintenance of the village mill, which is situated at the river below Syang. The eight households take the duty of operating the mill in turns. From early morning a member of the duty officer's household is at the mill to assist villages with the milling. For this service villagers pay a fee (usually 1/20 of the grain ground) which the duty officer keeps himself. After the buckwheat harvest the mill is in use until late in the night, and during this period the duty officer has a good income.

The village also has a group of mediators who advise the headmen on important matters and mediate in conflicts. Originally, the *phacan* provided two mediators each, but now the assembly appoint a handful of elderly respected men, including the chairmen of the four village wards.

Village law: Syang has a number of rules which apply to all villagers. The rules are written down in a law book; some of them are examined below.

The forests of Nepal are owned by the State and administered by the District Forestry Offices under the Ministry of Forestry. Nevertheless, the people of Syang consider the forests situated on the village land their property. Deforestation is a serious problem in Syang, therefore the village has introduced rules to protect the forests. Most forests are protected, but on a rotation basis at least one is unprotected. Villagers are allowed to cut dry wood and collect leaves and needles in any forest, but it is forbidden to cut living trees in the protected forest, while animals are allowed to graze anywhere. In 1980, the fine for cutting wood in protected forest was Rs 8 per load. It is also forbidden to bring forest products down to the village after dark.

Buckwheat is the main summer crop in Syang. It is easily damaged by frost and hail. Villagers believe that the risk can be reduced by sowing the crop at an auspicious time. The time is identified by an astrologer and announced by the criers. Villagers are fined if they sow the buckwheat beforehand.

Card-playing is the most popular form of gambling among the Thakalis. In Syang gambling is forbidden, except for a few days during certain festivals. The fine for gambling was formerly Rs 8, but the amount was too small to effectively prevent it, so in the late 1970s the village decided to raise it to Rs 500. Similarly, the fine on owner of gambling-dens was raised from Rs 16 to 1,000. Till 1990 nobody had yet been caught gambling under the new rules.

The fields of Syang are situated about 100 meters below the village. They are fenced off by low stone walls, but these do not effectively keep out the animals. Village workers therefore control the fields several times a day. Any stray animal is caught and returned to its owner who is fined Rs 3 or 6, depending on whether the animal is caught during the day or in the night¹³. If the village workers cannot identify the owner, they will make an announcement saying that the animal will be auctioned off if nobody claims it within a period of eight days. If an owner of a field can prove that an animal has caused substantial damage to his crop, he can claim full compensation from the animals' owner.

Syang has a drinking water supply system. The supply of water is limited, and it is therefore forbidden to wash clothes and kitchen utensils at the public taps; the fine for doing so is Rs 8 (1980).

Syang has a simple gravity irrigation system which was constructed centuries ago; it is operated and maintained by the villagers. Irrigation water is needed only during a few weeks in the cultivation cycle. In these periods

all villagers want the water first, and in order to avoid conflicts the village headmen prepare a schedule for the distribution of water. If a villager in the upper part of the system misses his turn and stops the water while the lower fields are being irrigated, he is fined Rs 8 (1980).

The village assembly in Syang has made primary schooling compulsory. Children start in kindergarten at the age of five and must continue until they have completed the 8th grade, or have reached the age of 18. The fine for shirking is Rs 1 per day¹⁴.

According to village rules, if a family has three or more sons, the second should serve the village as a ritual specialist. When young the 'householder priests' (*tawa*) take religious education and later they serve as caretaker of the village temple. Formerly, one could avoid becoming a *tawa* by paying a fine to the village, but this is no longer possible.

When a villager breaks a rule, the village workers will write down his name, the nature of the offence and the amount of fine to be paid. A few times a year a *nerpa* visits the persons on the list and collects the fines. The income from most fines (e.g. for cutting fresh wood, letting animals go loose in the fields, and washing clothes at the public taps) is divided equally between the village treasury, and the council members and the village workers, while the fine for illegal gambling and a few others go in full to the treasury. Any villager who catches a stray animal in the fields receives half of the fine while the other half goes to the village treasury.

The village council has no official power to enforce these fines. In spite of this, villagers always pay them. If a villager finds a fine unjust, he is free to bring it up in the assembly. Informants mention that if a villager should ever refuse to pay a fine, he would be expelled from the assembly and forbidden to use the village's irrigation and drinking water, pastures, forests, etc. More important, he would be boycotted socially – others would not marry anyone from his family, and he would not be permitted to use his clan's cremation ground and reliquary structure. In other words, he would be an outcast.

Syang has an unwritten rule that villagers should resolve internal conflict themselves, and disputes should be taken to the police and district court only if both parties agree. In the 1980s a conflict arose between two local teachers. One of them had completed grade five and the other grade seven. The district education office, however, appointed the former headmaster of the school because the official records showed that he had passed grade eight. The other teacher complained to the education office which realised the cheat and fired him. The headmaster brought up the case in the village assembly, and while the assembly disapproved of his cheating, it found the other teacher's action inappropriate. The assembly therefore ordered the teacher to make a formal apology which he did by presenting the headmaster a bottle of beer and a

ceremonial scarf. According to local tradition a formal apology ends a dispute and the two parties were told to forget the incident.

Public Works Programmes: Public works programmes in Syang include the construction and maintenance of irrigation canals, the drinking water system, roads, bridges, the school, the temple, etc.

When a work has to be undertaken the village headmen usually order one adult person per household or, if necessary, all adults to participate. The criers announce the programme, including the fine for staying away. These fines are divided equally between the village treasury on one hand and the headmen, the secretary, and the village workers on the other.

In 1977 the villagers of Syang constructed a drinking water supply system. UNICEF provided two hydraulic ramps, polythene pipes, cement two technicians and paid the transport costs of the materials to Jomsom, while the villagers contributed local construction materials (stones, wood, etc.) and unskilled labour. The project was completed within 20 days. The UNICEF technicians trained four villagers who were appointed by the headmen to operate and maintain the system. For this job each maintenance worker received Rs 360 a year (1980) from the village treasury. In 1982 the Government built a second drinking water supply system in the village. The new system is based on gravity and does not require regular maintenance, therefore the post of maintenance worker has been abolished.

In 1980 the Kali Gandaki river destroyed a section of the main trail below the fields of Syang. The village headmen decided to make a new alignment through a small field further away from the river. The villager has the right to expropriate private land against a payment of appropriate compensation. In this case the field was small and of poor quality and since it was worth only a few hundred rupees, the owner donated it to the village. The headmen ordered all villagers between the age of 15 to 61 to participate, but households with two or more adults were allowed to keep one at home. Villagers who did not participate were fined Rs 8 if they were present in the village, while those staying in the south were fined Rs 4.

In the summer of 1985 a landslide blocked the Syang river. When the river finally broke through it became a flood which destroyed the intake of the irrigation system as well as a bridge. This happened at the time when the fields were being irrigated, therefore the headmen decided to repair the intake immediately. More than one hundred villagers participated in the work. The women carried stones, while the men removed the silt and reconstructed the intake. Within five hours the irrigation canal was again operative. Unfortunately, the intake was destroyed by a new flood the next day. It was

repaired only to be destroyed again a few days later. The villagers repaired the intake for the third time, and there were no more floods that year.

Village Worship: *Dasain*, which usually falls in October, is the most important Hindu festival in Nepal. During this festival people visit their senior relatives to receive blessings and *tika* (a mixture of vermilion powder, rice and curd placed on the forehead). In Syang the village council meets in the school and sacrifices a sheep on behalf of the village, and children and other come to receive *tika* from the headmen. The sheep, which is paid for by the village treasury, is cooked and eaten by the members of the council, the village workers and the mediators.

On the outskirts of Syang there is a big cypress tree which is the home of the village's protective deity (*phola*). In May the village sacrifices a sheep at a small cypress tree next to the *phola*. On the same day a male goat is also sacrificed at a dried-up cypress tree in the northern end of the fields. The animals are paid for by the village treasury, and the meat is shared by the council members, the village workers and the local panchayat members.

The village sponsors a ceremony against smallpox. The ceremony takes place at small cypress tree situated in the middle of the fields and includes a sacrifice of a hen.

The village owns and operates a temple, which is situated in the middle of the village. A householder priest lights a butterlamp in the temple every day, and on the 10th and the 25th of every month there is worship and book recitation. Each *dur* household contributes 3 kg of grains a year to support the temple.

Relations to Other Villages: As mentioned earlier, Syang borders Marpha in the south, Dangarjhung in the north, and Thini in the east.

The border to Marpha runs horizontally through a south-facing mountain side above the Marpha river. The lower part belongs to Marpha and the upper to Syang. The middle part, which is an open steppe, is common property; both villages claim that it originally belonged to them¹⁵. The villages use this land for grazing animals, but only Syang has the right to the dung.

The northern border between Syang and Thini is disputed. Syang claims that its land extends approximately 50 meters north of the entrance to the military camp in Jomsom. Formerly, a reliquary stone structure marked the border, but some years ago it was demolished by the army. Thini claims that the border is several hundred meters further south. The disputed area is used for grazing animals and the villages have had many fights over it. For example, in the 1950s Thini tried to build a house on the land, but it was demolished by Syang. In 1959 the two villages signed an agreement

according to which the disputed land belongs to Syang, except for a 144 yard wide strip which is common property.

In 1960 the Government built a small airstrip on the disputed property to fly in relief supplies for the Tibetan refugees who had entered the area in 1959. The villagers of Syang built a house next to the airfield which they rented out to some Tibetan refugees who ran it as a hotel. In 1972-73 the airstrip was extended, thereby making the area more accessible to tourists. There are now more than 40 houses around the airfield, including many hotels.

In 1981 the Government prepared a map of Mustang district including the boundaries of the village panchayats. The map showed the airport as a part of Thini-Jomsom panchayat. Marpha panchayat (to which Syang belongs) complained to the Chief District Officer. When this did not help, it sent in vain a delegation to Kathmandu to complain to the Home Minister. A second delegation, however, obtained a written statement from the government that the border between Marpha and Thini-Jomsom panchayats follows the alignment agreed to by Syang and Thini in 1959.

The main section of the border between Syang and Thini follows the Kali Gandaki river. The southern part of Thini includes the forest-covered slopes of the Nilgiri mountain. Syang has traditionally had the right to use the Nilgiri forest against an annual fee which in 1972 was Rs 31, but following a dispute in 1979 it was raised to Rs 301.

The dispute started when a villager from Syang wanted to fell 50 trees. He obtained a permission from the chairman of Marpha village panchayat as well as the District Forest Officer (DFO) in Jomsom. The DFO marked the trees and the villager from Syang sent some southern labourers to fell them. One day some villagers from Thini found several muskdeer traps close to the place where the men were working. They searched the labourers and found some strings similar to the ones used in the traps. The men were brought to the DFO and locked up. However, in the night they threw flour in the eyes of the DFO staff and escaped. Nobody believed this account and DFO staff were later suspended.

The man from Syang was contacted by some Thini representatives who upon hearing his explanation informed him that the chairman of Marpha had no authority over Thini's forests, instead he should have obtained a permission from the Thini-Jomsom panchayat. The dispute was finally settled when the Syangtan man agreed to pay a fine of Rs 600 to the Thini-Jomsom panchayat^{15b}.

A new conflict broke out between Thini and Syang in 1984. The conflict started when Syang denied people from Thini-Jomsom access to the forest on their common northern border. Thini retaliated by suspending Syang's rights

to the Nilgiri forest. The headmen of Syang then ordered all women above the age of 15 to collect pine needles and dried wood in the Nilgiri forest. On their return the women found the bridge over the Kali Gandaki blocked by a group of men from Thini, who forcibly took the women's baskets and burned them. The next day the women protested in vain to the Chief District Officer in Jomsom. The headmen of Syang then ordered all men above the age of 15 years to cut wood in the forest; the fine for staying away was Rs 100 a day. After a few days with some minor skirmishes the villages finally agreed that Syang could temporarily continue to use the forest until a mediator had settled the dispute.

Inter-village Political Organisations in Pacgau: The forests and pastures of Pacgau are owned by the individual villages, except for a pasture and a forest above Chairo which are the joint property of the five villages. Formerly the five villages of Pacgau used to meet every third year to discuss their use, but the meetings ceased, however, in the early 1960s. The meetings were re-introduced in 1974 and the villages now meet annually.

In August 1977 the meeting took place in the panchayat building in Marpha. The participants included the headmen, mediators and members of the local village panchayats from the five villages. There were two major items on the agenda.

First, in 1976 the villagers of Marpha had cut large number of trees from the common forest without consulting the other villages. The wood had been used to cover the canal which runs parallel to the main street in Marpha. The representatives from Marpha argued that they should not be fined because the wood had been used for development purposes, but as a good-will gesture they offered to present Rs 101 to Pacgau's common fund. The other villages accepted that, but it was agreed to charge a fee of Rs 1 per 10 cubic feet of wood cut in the future.

Second, the villages decided to establish a common fund to finance future meetings and cultural programmes. The fund received an initial capital of Rs 1,900, out of which Marpha contributed Rs 500, Thini 500, Syang 400, Cimang 300, and Chairo 200. The villages keep their respective contribution and pay only the interest (10 percent per annum).

Thini, syang, and Cimang are known as "the three villages" (*yhulka som*) and are the homeland of the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakalis. The three villages traditionally met every third year to discuss matters of common interest. Around 1960 the villages established a formal organisation which has the authority to introduce laws that apply to all Yhulkasompaimi Thakalis.

For example, in 1974 the assembly of the three villages passed several rules relating to traditional marriage customs and in 1977 rules relating to

death ceremonies. It also decided in 1977 to exchange singers during festivals in order to strengthen and develop Yhulkasompaimhi's traditional culture. To finance these and other activities, the villages established a common fund to which Thini and Syang contributed Rs 500 each and Cimang 300. The villages keep their respective contributions and pay only the interest (10 percent per annum). They now meet annually and the venue rotates between them.

The Chikyap System: At the end of the 19th century the customs contractors (*subba*) of the Balbir lineage of Tikche village in Thaksatsae clan emerged as the most powerful family in Thak Khola.

At the time the villages of Pacgau and Baragau paid several thousand rupees in landtax to the Government. The tax had not increased much since the beginning of the 19th century and had actually decreased in real terms, but it was still a burden. The villagers in Pacgau and Baragau were well aware of the *subba*'s friendship with the rulers in Kathmandu, and around 1930 they requested the *subba* to use their influence to get the tax reduced. The *subba* succeeded and subsequently the villagers in Pacgau and Baragau asked the members of the *subba* family to become external headmen (*chikyap*) of their villages.

The *chikyap* mediated in conflicts within and between villages in Pacgau and Baragau. They also initiated the construction and rehabilitation of irrigation systems, and in the 1950s they started the first schools in Pacgau.

As payment for his services, the *chikyap* received free meals and fodder for his horse whenever he visited the village, and once a year he was also presented with a goat (later only a chicken). Further, the villagers worked free a few days a year in his fields¹⁶. Finally, in Thini, Syang, and Marpha the *chikyap* gave each household ten *pathi* of barley as a loan. The beneficiaries were obliged to pay interest on the loan without being permitted to clear it for good by returning the capital. The initial interest was as high as 4 *pathi* a year, but it was later reduced to 3 *pathi* and further to 2 *pathi*.

The *chikyap* system and the non-repayable loans were abolished when the Panchayat System was introduced in the early 1960s. Informants from Marpha, Thini, and Syang claim that the Thakali *subba* forced the *chikyap* system and the non-refundable loans (and money lending) upon the people of Pacgau and Baragau in order to dominate and exploit them.

The Panchayat System in Thak Khola: Prior to the introduction of the panchayat system Thak Khola was part of Baglung district. When Mustang district was created in 1962, it extended south to Tatopani, and the district headquarters was at Dana, immediately south of Thak Khola. However,

in 1974 the area south of Ghasa was transferred to Myagdi district, and Jomsom became the new headquarters of Mustang district.

Mustang was divided into 16 village panchayats. There were six village panchayats in Thak Khola, namely Thini-Jomsom, Marpha, Tukche, Kobang, Lete and Kunjo.

In most parts of Thak Khola the traditional political institutions continued to exist side by side with the panchayat system. Roughly, the villages' external affairs were the domain of the traditional institutions, while the internal affairs were the domain of the national political system. The following example illustrates how the two systems co-existed in Marpha village panchayat and how the Thakalis changed the rules of the national political system to bring them into line with traditional practices.

Marpha village panchayat included Marpha, Syang and Chairo villages. It was divided into nine wards; there were four in Marpha and Syang, and one in Chairo.

Although Marpha, Syang and Chairo belonged to the same panchayat, they functioned as separate entities. For example, the forests of Syang could only be used by the people of Syang. Also, the chairman, who was from Marpha, had no say whatsoever in the internal affairs of Syang village.

According to the rules and regulations of the panchayat system, the ward chairmen should be elected by the electorate in their respective wards. However, in Syang they were appointed by the village assembly. The appointment was done in the same way as that of the village headmen. Thus, the assembly members from Ward No. 5 appointed the chairman of Ward No. 6, the members from Ward No. 6 appointed the chairman of Ward No. 7, and so on.

Further, according to the panchayat system, the chairman and the vice-chairman of the village panchayat should be directly elected by the electorate. However, Syang, Marpha and Chairo had an informal agreement according to which Marpha provided the chairman and Syang or Chairo the vice-chairman. They were not elected, but appointed by the respective village assemblies in the same way as the village headmen.

In 1982 Marpha attempted to merge the traditional political organisation with the panchayat system by handing over the functions of the headmen to the chairmen of the four wards and the chairman of the village panchayat. In line with traditional practice, the four clans each provided a ward chairman. This change was supported mainly by the younger members of the village community. However, two years later the village assembly reverted to the traditional system on the ground that the governing of the village had become too loose under the new system.

Under the Rana regime the state interfered little in the affairs of local communities as long as they paid their taxes and maintained law and order. This situation changed after the fall of the Rana regime in 1951. Since then the state has been seeking to promote the welfare of the people.

Under the panchayat system there was a dramatic rise in the number of government officials serving in the districts and in the transfer of government funds for development purposes. In the 1980s the government provided about Rs. 20 million annually for development activities in Mustang district. This amount excluded the cost of major programmes funded by foreign donors, such as an electrification project.

Among the funds which Mustang district received from the government was an annual allocation of about Rs 2 million which the district assembly administered. The money was divided so that each village panchayat got at least one project every year. Projects included mostly small scale local infrastructure works, such as irrigation, school buildings, bridges, playgrounds, etc.

The district assembly also introduced local taxes and duties to finance development activities. The most profitable duty was one levied on animals passing south through the district. The district council fixed the rates and through tender appointed a contractor as the collector of duties. In 1988 the contractor paid Rs 80,200 a year. He collected the duties at the small settlement of Kokhethati in Thaksatse. The duty was Rs 5 per sheep/goat and Rs. 1.50 per mule. No duties were imposed on animals heading north¹⁷.

Elections in Mustang District: Until the introduction of the panchayat system the political power in Mustang district was in the hands of two families, namely the Maharaja of Lo (Mustang) and the *subba* of Tukche.

During the first general election in Nepal, in 1959, the *subba* family and the Thakalis were divided into two groups – one supported Mohanman Serchan and the other his brother Hitman. Hitman's son Yogindraman was a candidate of the Nepali Congress Party, while Mohanman's son Lalitman ran as an independent candidate. Yogindraman won the election and was later appointed assistant minister in B.P. Koirala's cabinet. In 1960 King Mahendra seized power and jailed the Congress leaders, including Yogindraman. Yogindraman was released some years later, but shortly afterwards he was killed in a car accident.

The first election under the panchayat system took place in 1963. Until 1980 there were indirect elections to the national assembly, and the members were thus elected by a handful of other pancha leaders. In 1963 Narsing

Bhakta Tulachan from Tukche was the only candidate in Mustang district; he was later appointed assistant minister.

There were two candidates at the 1968-election, Narsing Bhakta Tulachan from Tukche and K.N. Sharma from Rakhu south of Thak Khola (at that time Mustang district extended down to Tatopani). The *subba* were against Tulachan and supported Sharma, but Tulachan won the election. However, Sharma filed a complaint against the way the election had been conducted. The appeal was accepted and Sharma became Mustang's representative in the national assembly.

At the election in 1973 there were four Tamang Thakali candidates – from Tatopani, Lete, Kobang and Tukche. They realised, however, that if they all stood the Tamang Thakali vote would be split and none of them would be elected. They agreed to decide the candidature by drawing lots. Amritlal Serchan from Tukche won and was subsequently elected member of the national assembly¹⁸.

In 1979 the Tamang Thakalis could not agree on a single candidate, thus Nar Bahadur Hirachan, a rich contractor from Marpha, was elected. This was a tremendous boost to the people of Pacgau (especially Marpha) who for more than a century had been dominated by the Tamang Thakalis.

In Nepal there was widespread unrest in 1979. The situation calmed down only after King Birendra, who had become King in 1972, announced that the people of Nepal in a referendum would decide whether they wanted a multi-party system or continuity in the panchayat system with appropriate reforms.

The referendum took place in May 1980. The panchayat system got 54 percent of the (valid) votes, against 46 percent for the multi-party system.

In Mustang district the panchayat system achieved an overwhelming victory. Out of the 6,899 votes cast, 85 percent were for the panchayat system, 10 percent for the multi-party system, while 5 percent were declared invalid. This was the second highest percentage of votes for the panchayat system among the country's 75 districts. There are several possible explanations for this high support for the panchayat system in Mustang. First, the people of the district have always sided with the rulers in Kathmandu. Second, they are strong supporters of the King who has visited the district many times and takes a particular interest in the area. Third, the district has developed much under the panchayat system. Fourth, in contrast to the Congress party the panchayat supporters had funds and an effective organisation at the district and village levels. And fifth, at the polls yellow symbolized the panchayat system and blue the multi-party system; among Buddhists yellow is a holy colour, and a vote for yellow was thus a vote for the religion and the King.

Following the referendum the constitution of Nepal was amended in 1980. According to this amendment, the members of the national assembly were elected directly by the electorate¹⁹. It thus became more difficult for the political leaders to decide the election themselves.

The next election to the national assembly took place in 1981. Several candidates stood for the election. The Tamang Thakali vote was again split and Nar Bahadur Hirachan was reelected. Hirachan was later appointed assistant minister in the L.B. Chand cabinet.

The last election to the national assembly under the panchayat system took place in 1986. There were several candidates, including some from Pacgau, Baragau and Lo. This time the vote in Marpha (and Pacgau) was split between Hirachan and his brother-in-law. The Tamang Thakalis supported mainly the chairman of the district panchayat, Rudra Prasad Serchan from Lamjung. Serchan won the election, but with only 41 votes more than the Lo King's son-in-law.

In the spring of 1990 violent pro-democracy demonstrations broke out in Kathmandu. The situation endangered the very existence of the monarchy, and King Birendra agreed to lift the ban on political parties and to introduce a multi-party democracy. A new constitution was promulgated in November 1990.

The first election to the new Lower House took place in April 1991. The Nepali Congress Party won more than half of the seats, but the Nepal Communist Party (Maxist-Leninist) came a strong second. The two parties of former panchayat leaders (NPP-Chand and NPP-Thapa) got only a total of five seats.

In Mustang district the NCP (M-L) got 2,347 votes, the NPP-Chand 2,209 votes, and the Nepali Congress Party 2,082 votes. Mustang, which only ten years earlier had been a stronghold of the panchayat system, had elected a Communist (Mr. Om Bikas Gauchan, a Tamang Thakali from Jomsom) to the Lower House. The Nepali Congress Party, which had been expected to win, lost because of internal conflicts.

At the local elections in July 1992 the conflicts in the Nepali Congress Party had been partly settled, and the party won the posts of district chairman and vice-chairman as well as six out of the nine seats in the district assembly (the other three went to supporters of the former panchayat leaders). Once again the people of Mustang had sided with the rulers in Kathmandu.

Conclusions

The Thak Khola valley is traditionally divided into two separate parts, namely Thaksatsae and Pacgau. Thaksatsae is a union of thirteen villages, while Pacgau comprises five separate villages.

The villages of Pacgau have well-developed political institutions, including a village assembly, a government, and written laws. The assembly makes the laws and appoints the members of the government who ensures that order in the village is maintained and that public services (drinking water supply, irrigation water, etc.) are functioning.

The political and judicial system is based on equality – but women are discriminated against. With few exceptions, all households in the village are represented in the assembly. The post of headman is ideally open to any member of the village assembly, and in Pacgau a relatively large number of household heads actually become a headman at least once in their lifetime. In Thak Khola the ecclesiastical and the temporal powers are clearly separated, and in some villages religious specialists cannot become headman.

The traditional political system in Thak Khola may be characterized as democracy. Villagers are proud of their democratic institutions and refer to a local proverb which says that the rules of Pacgau are decided by voting²⁰.

The political system of Pacgau includes some interesting features which are not found in the Western or parliamentary form of democracy. First, the term of government members is limited to one year. Members may be nominated to a second term, but they usually do not continue in government for many years with the result that many male villagers become government members at least once in their lives. Second, government members are evaluated at the end of their term and are fined if the assembly has been dissatisfied with their performance. Third, the different groups (clans) in the village assembly do not elect their own representatives in the government, but those of the other groups. And fourth, the headmen take the oath of office at the end of their term.

There are some important differences in the political system of Thaksatsae and Pacgau.

First, Pacgau comprises a number of independent villages, while Thaksatsae is a union of thirteen villages. In Pacgau the political organisation is strong at the village level, but weak at the inter-village level, while the opposite is true in Thaksatsae. The villages in Pacgau are like the 6th century BC Greek city states (*polis*), while Thaksatsae is more like a tribal society. The political organisation at the village level is strong in Pacgau because the fields in the area are irrigated and the construction, maintenance, and operation of the irrigation system require strong political institutions. Moreover, the villages of Pacgau such as Marpha, Thini and Syang each has more than 100 households, while a typical village Thaksatsae has only about 20-30 households.

Second, the political system in Pacgau is more democratic than in Thaksatsae. In Pacgau the headmen rotate annually, while in Thaksatsae once they are elected the headmen serve until they die, retire or are dismissed.

The strong local political institutions in Thak Khola have facilitated the implementation and maintenance of small-scale development projects.

Thak Khola has been a part of the Nepalese state since the 1780s. Since the 1950s the state has been seeking to promote the welfare of the people and it therefore plays an important and direct role in local affairs. In spite of this, the people of Thak Khola have been able to maintain their traditional political systems – internal affairs are the domain of the traditional political systems, while external affairs are the domain of the national political system.

Many foreigners and Nepalese claim that multiparty democracy has not yet taken root in Nepal mainly because the rural population is illiterate and with no prior experience in democracy. The present article shows that this is incorrect – at least in the case of the Thakalis of Mustang.

Notes

1. One of the best descriptions of a local political system is Charles Ramble's "Rule by Play in Southern Mustang," pp. 287-301 in: Charles Ramble and Martin Brauen, *Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalaya*, Zürich 1993: Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zürich.
2. The present article is based on information collected during fieldwork in Nepal in 1972, 1975-78 and 1980-81, and subsequent periodic visits.
3. For the history of Mustang district, see Michael Vinding, "A History of the Thak Khola Valley, Nepal". *Kailash*, Vol. XIV, No. 3-4, 1988.
4. For an introduction to the Thakalis, see Michael Vinding, *Lha Phewa. The Thakali 12-Year Festival*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1992. For a list of publications on the Thakalis, see Michael Vinding and Krishna B. Bhattachan, "An Annotated Bibliography on the Thakalis." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1985, pp. 1-24.
5. For the economy of the Thakalis of Thak Khola, see Michael Vinding, "Making a Living in the Nepal Himalayas: The Case of the Thakalis of Mustang District" *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1984.
6. The wives of assembly members are not allowed in. At lunch time women bring food to their husbands. They leave it at the gate, and it is handed to the members by the village workers. Consequently, I have never been able to attend an assembly meeting in Syang.
7. For the form and function of Thakali descent groups, see Michel Vinding, "A Note on Patrilineal Descent Groups among the Thakalis

of the Nepal Himalayas" *Folk*, Vol. 23, 1981.

8. According to village rule, the second son in family should become a 'householder priest' (*tawa*). Since the householder priests already served the village in their religious capacity, they were formerly exempted from serving as headman. This rule has now been abrogated.
9. Syang is definitely not poor. The Jomsom Airport area belongs to Syang. When a small airfield was constructed in the early 1960s the villagers of Syang built a house nearby. It was rented out for Rs 1,200 a year (1972) to some Tibetan refugees who ran a hotel. The Tibetans left in 1974 after the Royal Nepal Army conducted a campaign against Tibetan guerilla fighters in the district. In the late 1970s Syang sold the house to a local villager for Rs 60,000.
10. At first I could not believe that the headmen took the oath at the end of their term. However, informants explain that it is more binding for an official to swear that he has not done anything wrong at the end of his term than at the installation.
11. Rules are usually introduced and passed by the assembly. However, the headmen have the right to introduce new rules without the approval of the assembly. Informants mention that this does not happen often because the headmen would be afraid to be later criticised and fined by the assembly.
12. In 1980 village headmen received Rs 110 each and the secretary Rs 301.
13. These are the 1980 rates for cows, *jho*, horses and mules. Goats count as $\frac{1}{4}$ of an animal, therefore the fines are Rs 0.75 and Rs 1.50.
14. If a child stays away for several days the fine is reduced to Rs 0.50 a day (1980). However, if a child goes to the south during winter and does not attend when school reopens in March the fine is Rs 1 a day.
15. Informants from Marpha explain that 'in the old days' a village headman exchanged this land with Syang for a beautiful fur coat. The villagers of Marpha are said later to have killed the headman. According to villagers in Syang, the land was originally theirs, but some fifty years ago Marpha cheated them out of it. The story goes that some people from Marpha went to the disputed land and counted the number of pillars in the herdsmen's huts. Then they went to Syang and claimed that the land was theirs. When the villagers objected, the Marpha people said if the land belonged to Syang, they should be able to say how many pillars there were in the herdsmen's huts. The people of Syang were unable to answer that and instead said, if the land belonged to Marpha, then they should know it. The Marpha villagers then mentioned the number of pillars in each hut which

proved to be correct. The villages finally solved the conflict through a mediator from Tsherok who suggested that they keep the land as common property, and both the villages agreed to it.

- 15b. There is another version of the events leading to the increase in this annual fee. A written agreement between Syang and Marpha states that if the bridge over the Kali Gandaki between Syang and Thini is deliberately damaged, the village responsible should forfeit its right to use the Nilgiri forest. One day, the bridge was found to have been rendered unusable. Representatives of Syang came to Thini, accusing the latter of violating the agreement, on the ground that no one from Syang would have damaged a bridge that existed primarily for its own benefit. Thini, however, had inside information to the contrary, and, under physical duress, the Syang representatives confessed that members of their own village had committed the act in an attempt to deprive Thini of its rights to the forest. The annual fee was subsequently raised to Rs. 301 (Charles Ramble, personal communication).
16. The *chikyap* were also money-lenders. There were many poor people in Pacgau and Baragau, and when a loan defaulted the *chikyap* took over the collateral – usually a plot of land. Consequently, the *chikyap* owned much land in Pacgau and Baragau.
17. The reason for taxing the animals going south and not north is that in autumn large numbers (according to informants 14,000 in 1988) of sheep and goats from Tibet pass through the valley to be sold in the south during the *dasain* festival.
18. Informants mention that the four Tamang candidates also agreed that the winner should pay the others a total of Rs. 40,000 to cover various election expenses. Further, Serchan was a man of modest means, therefore a member of the *subba* family paid the money on his behalf.
19. The Third Amendment went a long way in making the Panchayat System more democratic. First, the members of the national assembly were elected directly by the people. Second, the Prime Minister was nominated by the King on the basis of recommendation by the national assembly. And third, the Prime Minister became responsible to the national assembly. However, political parties continued to be banned.
20. The proverb is as follows, “the rules of Pacgau are cut by (the) stone (s) (used when voting).”

NAMING ANTI-DEVELOPMENTAL ATTITUDES

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Attitudinal Base

Every nation has a development culture of its own, and a nation's traditional culture has a tremendous impact on its development attitudes and attempts. An objective retrospection of Nepal's past developmental trends and planning history establishes this. We see how we have believed more in rhetorics than real actions. Most of our ivory-towered and foreign-trained planners, cosily seated on their high revolving chairs, have preferred to travel on maps and act on blueprints or paper plans alone. As a result, we have remained where we started from, as a weather-cock rotating ceaselessly on a fixed place. We always copycated whatever western model was in fashion at a given time, and when it proved to be a square peg in a round hole in our national context, we skipped and hopped for another one.

If some complained about the extremely low speed and level of development, planners and economists easily put their fingers on our lack of capital investment, insufficient know-how, and inadequate resource base and infrastructural framework to build on as causal factors. They generally tend to forget about the huge inflow of foreign aid and loans and natural resources we have used so far.

My position is that Nepal is neither idea-poor nor resource-poor. Our real poverty is in developmental attitude, willingness, commitment and action. Lack of right attitude is our main setback. Our vision of development still seems blur, particularly in aspects of how and for whom. We have become more and more reliant on foreign aid and loans than being self-reliant; more backward-looking than forward-looking or futuristic. Ivan Illich is right when he says, "Underdevelopment is also a state of mind" (1972: 136).

One has to ask, for example, why a village such as Barpak, with a population of 11,000, among them many ex-Gurkhas, did not have its own high school till the mid-1980s, while a merchantile town such as Bandipur constructed a high school in 1951.

(Shrestha and Mikesell 1991: 4)

Acquisition of Attitudes and Values

As members of given society, we socialize and acquire and internalize a set of norms and values, knowingly and unknowingly. In turn, they colour our perception, form our attitudes, and shape our behaviour. They determine our mental mapping of the world we live in: how we interpret it for ourselves; how we perceive our locus and role in it; and most importantly, how we react to a given situation – with action or apathy, with alertness or complacency. “Values are the software which makes a nation’s social and economic hardware tick” (*The Economist*, Nov. 28, 1992: 29).

However, values that we acquire do not remain static. The more we come in contact with and receive exposure from the outside world, resocialize, interact, and intellectually mature with exposure to multiple media sources, our values are bound to change.

It is also the rule of time game that old values or orders change, giving way to new ones. In the force of gradually rising western values, such as individualism, consumerism and materialism, some of our age-old cultural values are sure to give way and crumble down by and by. “However strong values (Asian) may be, economic forces change” (*The Economist*, May 28, 1992: 23).

Sifting Values Good and Bad

One thing should be kept in mind here. All modern values are not equally good and worth adopting. Nor are all traditional values and sociocultural norms outmoded and dogmatic. Such sheer generalisation and stereotyping are naive and misleading.

In Third World societies, there still exist some useful conservative values that are worth-retaining and even deserve further fostering. They have given their peoples and nations a distinct personality, character and identity. Also they have been helpful in keeping the fabric of their mosaic societies harmonious and intact. In a sense, they have given a meaning and intent to their life. Such hallmarks of practical wisdom include the joint or extended family system, high regards for elders and ancestors, a feeling of collective good, a deep-set sense of morality and social obligation, spirituality in life style, a respect for nature emanating from religiosity among other elements. Such values have survived against odds because of their underlying humanitarian aspects. So what we need to do is to analyses positive and constructive elements in old practices and sift away the negative ones from them.

This is not to say that there may be no value in discriminating between harmless ideas and inhibiting superstitions. For instance, some hill communities believe that a fruit tree will not bear fruit unless planted over a dead monkey. This is unlikely to be true but other cultural practices may be very practical. For instance farmers did not like to plant a certain kind of wheat, despite yields eight times larger than usual, because they felt hungry after eating it; it contained a very low fibre content (Wake 1984: 153).

While talking about the South Asian development scenario, P. T. Bauer has presented a gamut of attitudes, beliefs and modes of conduct that have hindered development here. Some of the points raised can be challenged because they reflect the writer's western bias. But most of them are realistic in nature.

Examples of significant attitudes, beliefs and modes of conduct unfavourable to material progress include lack of interest in material advance, combined with resignation in the face of poverty, lack of initiative, self-reliance and of a sense of personal responsibility for the economic fortunes of oneself and one's family; high leisure preference, together with a lassitude often found in tropical climates; relatively high prestige of passive or contemplative life compared to active life; the prestige of mysticism and renunciation of the world compared to acquisition and achievement, acceptance of the idea of a preordained, unchanging and unchangeable universe; emphasis on performance of duties and acceptance of obligations, rather than achievement of results, or assertion or even a recognition of personal rights; lack of sustained curiosity, experimentation and interest in change; belief in the efficacy of supernatural and occult forces and of their influence over one's destiny; insistence on the unity of the organic universe, and on the need to live with nature rather than conquer it or harness it to man's needs, an attitude of which reluctance to take animal life is a corollary; belief in perpetual reincarnation, which reduces the significance of effort in the course of the present life; recognised status of beggary, together with a lack of stigma in the acceptance of charity; opposition to women's work outside the household (Bauer 1971: 78-79).

Naming Anti-developmental Attitudes

It is not feasible to deal with all these attitudes in this short article. So I wish to be selective and focus on some significant anti-developmental

attitudes and behaviour alone which still influence our developmental efforts and activities, which are change-resistant and have survived in the face of modernising forces of changes, and thus have so far made whatever changes have occurred shallow and superficial. We must not forget:

The actual change in consciousness involves a change in the meanings that a person assigns to everything in himself and his environment (Garner 1977: 46).

The issues I will deal here are casteism, fatalism, conservatism and anti-feminism (sexism). All or some of these have been reasons for the revival of or reinforcement in Islamic fundamentalism and Hinduism lately. They have been putting their weight on our developmental efforts and hindered or slowed down their pace a great deal.

Casteism: Caste system or casteism is a rare species of social behaviour still found only in Hindu societies in Nepal and India, and partly in some Japanese quarter. It is a kind of classical apartheid or one of the oldest social institutions that stratifies and segregates people into different social hierarchies.

Under this system, a large chunk of people, that is nearly eighteen percent of India's Hindu population (*Time*, 13 April 1992) and 14.64 percent of Nepal's total population (National census 1991) are unjustly classified as untouchables. Because of this, in the seemingly harmonious mosaic societies in these countries, there flows a latent undercurrent of discrimination, internal division, psychological rift and strain.

Historically, the caste system was introduced merely to facilitate the functioning of a society through the scientific division of works, or it was just a process of professional grouping. Later on, shrewd and crafty Brahmins who were positioned at the apex of the caste hierarchy, and who monopolised knowledge and learning of the Vedas or the holy scriptures "inserted new fictitious stories and *slokas* (stanzas) in the entire religious literature ... to maintain their prestige and supremacy" (Sagar 1975: 121).

Later on, casteism became strictly ascriptive and hereditary in nature. According to the parental lineage, a person is put under one of the Varnas or caste categories, namely Brahmin (Priest), Chhetri (Warrior), Vaishya (Businessman), or Shudra (Untouchable).

Birth in a particular caste is attributed to the *karma* (fate) or deed(s) performed in some unknown previous life, and thus was considered predestined and unalterable. This made untouchability a lifelong condemnation, passed from generation to generation.

Casteism also carries strong religious overtones (Srinivas 1970: 271), depicting predeterminism. Many religious teachers and reformers including Buddha, Gandhi, Kabir, Aiyappan, Ambedkar and so forth have tried to eliminate this social evil, but with limited success. Lord Buddha attempted to break this myth by accepting *khir* or milk porridge from a low-caste woman and water from an untouchable woman. His preaching against the dogma proceeds as follows: every person is the master of oneself, and it is the deed of a person in the present life which makes a man great (pundit) or small (chandal), not the birth in a particular caste. But the caste system lingers on to today, mainly among villagers and illiterate commoners in urban areas. It remains even in the minds of orthodox intellectuals.

How dehumanising caste can be and how it deprives untouchables from even basic human rights are evident from the following example. Let alone using the same well or tap, in Southern India untouchables are not allowed to walk in the same path as a Brahmin with a fear that they would defile and contaminate it. Even an untouchable's shadow is considered to be capable of defiling a Brahmin. Rao has well demasked the inhuman face of the caste system in the following lines.

An Izhava was not allowed to call his dwelling a house, but only a hut, and had to refer to his food as cowdung. He was not permitted to wear any footwear or use an umbrella. Izhava women were not allowed to cover their breasts (Rao 1981: 192).

Caste apartheid

Most Badi kids are bastards and cannot identify their bonafide fathers. Consequently, they find it difficult to get their citizenship and have enrollment problem in schools. Even if they anyhow managed to get admission, they are usually segregated as untouchables – a casteist apartheid – and face humiliation in the society. Such behaviour discouraged them from joining schools, though they feel eager and willing to be educated.

(Gautam 1993)

Casteism thus erects an unsurmountable wall of social distance between castes. But its worst part is its tremendous psychological impact. Under this institution the high caste people tend to be megalomaniac; it fosters an attitude of moral aloofness in them (Kapp 1963: 52); and it makes them fundamentally and humanely insensate to the mass of the population who belong to the lower strata (Shils 1959: 257-58). Untouchables, on the other hand, internalise their caste-based feeling of inferiority. They perceive

themselves as lowly creatures in the society and build a negative self-image which in turn thwarts their personal development. They are either aloof or escapist in their approach to life and always prefer to live in a low profile. As Wagatsuma says about the Burakumin, because of their suppressed rebellious and vindictive feelings, they become delinquents, and learn bad habits and social pathologies in their environment. People can feel in them "something vicious, something dirty, something unnameable, but something which can be felt, like a strong odour" (Wagatsuma 1967: 130).

Such discernable caste-specific behaviour forms a typical 'caste culture'. Speaking about the psychological effects generative of such social behaviour, Berreman asserts:

Avoidance, apathy, withdrawal and over-compliance may be common adjustments to low-caste status, as are mobility, escape, and passive and aggressive resistance (Berreman 1976: 62).

Such apathy, compounded with lack of interest in material achievements, keeps low castes at the lowest rung of economic status. It becomes clear from the abject living standard and quality of life of the untouchables in India and Nepal, characterised by filth, squalor and unhygienic life. They face deprivation and consequently belong to the least privileged and poorest sector in society (Seddon 1988: 187). There emerges a distinct polarisation of wealth and power (Forde 1963: 62; Weber 1985: 26). Their ignorance, ill-networking, resourcelessness and powerlessness make them even more vulnerable to further oppression and exploitation. In K. P. Malla's words:

However, behind this social and cultural facade lurks ugly social realities of ritual degradation and social and material deprivation of a vast number of outcasts of whom we rarely, if ever, speak except as a taboo (Malla 1993).

Haliriti (ploughman – master relationship)

The landowner – in Durai, usually a Brahmin lends the ploughman – generally a cobbler – a sum of money (between 100 and 200 rupees) and the latter agrees to work as the farmer's ploughman until the loan is paid... often difficult for a ploughman to repay his debt, and so he is, in effect, bound to work for the landowner indefinitely.

(Caplin 1972: 61)

No school for low castes

Headman Bali, Burten decided to start teaching a small number of children... mostly cobblers in the village. The Rana Brahmins were furious and the outcry was led by the pandits... The Brahmins thought that if the cobblers became literate, they would have to plough and carry their own loads, and they didn't like the idea. They said that as priests, they had to work for their clients and hadn't time to work in their fields as well. So the school just folded up.

(Caplin 1972:61)

In addition to this, the concept of hereditary occupation inherent in the caste system leaves people fewer alternative choices and means for diversification in their traditional trades, which debars the process of industrialisation (Sagar 1975; Harrison 1982; Goldhorpe 1984). Weber also considers the caste system as a hindrance to economic development (1962:111). "Many studies of economic change in South Asia revealed that development has led only to a worsening of the position of the lower castes. When the local job market expands, they cannot obtain work, possibly because of caste discrimination or because they are unskilled and illiterate" (Caplin 1972:86). Kapp also rightly observes:

The segmentation and widespread antagonism... prevent the larger loyalties and development of a spirit of solidarity and participation without which neither economic development nor political democracy can be achieved (Kapp 1963: 49).

Mair, the well known sociologist, also holds a similar view. So long as the caste system continues, development remains a castle of sand. She asserts:

Economists argue that 'caste' will have to be abolished before there is hope of any successful development in India (Mair 1984: 89).

It is not, however, easy to get rid of casteism until and unless the blind faith on karma or fate, on which the system hinges, is dispersed.

Fatalism: Fatalistic belief is based on predeterminism. The believers think that their fortune is carved by God or some unknown supernatural force in heaven. Hence it is unmodifiable or unalterable by any human force. Such a philosophy of life breeds a sense of powerlessness and futility of any sort of action in attempting to change one's fixed fate.

Being pre-conditioned mentally like this, people become complacent and submissive to a given situation. They lose dynamism in life and adopt a non-initiative-taking attitude. In this sense, fatalism can be taken as an antithesis to progressive-mindedness and innovativeness. Mystified under this spell of Circe, commoners as well as immature intellectuals are mentally paralysed.

The iron grip of and dependency on fate is stronger in illiterate villagers than in urban quarters. Superstitions and ignorance go together, reinforcing each other.

Ignorance

Mahili had a disease of spinal cords. She took it as a *Kancho Bayu* or an evil eye and consulted a *Jhankri* (a local witchdoctor) instead of seeing a medical doctor and thus was crippled for life due to improper treatment.

(Pradhan 1991)

Lack of health consciousness

In Jumla Villages, people lack health consciousness. They are fatalistic. If health workers go to their places, they react like this: what will this inoculation do if fate is not favourable?

Inoculators from the health post discriminate. They visit nearby Brahmin and Chhetri (high castes) villages but do not go to Sarkis (low caste shoemakers).

(Koirala 1991)

Sinha's research on Indian villages supports this fact. The less educated and poorer the people are, the more they are likely to be superstitious and fatalistic in their outlook and attitude. "The present condition was frequently ascribed to divine will or bad luck by a very large number of them" (Sinha 1969:205). It means ignorance/poverty and fatalistic attitude has somehow reciprocal causal relationship.

The direct implications of this anti-developmental attitude called fatalism are numerous. Apart from creating apathy and less interest in new ventures, they make people less receptive to new ideas, techniques and methods. Their idea of "limited goods" compounded with unscientific outlook refrains them from the adoption of progressive ways of working.

The Indian cultivator... even today often believes that an increase in yields is not due to improved techniques but to our fate and *karma* (Kapp 1963:12)

Likewise, talking about the difficulties in the implementation of the family planning programme in Nepal and Lesotho, an anonymous writer points out:

A woman's fertility is considered less related to her physiology than to her karma (fate), her role in past lives.

According to Freire, a humanist educationist with infinite faith in the potentiality of people in transforming the world, people's fatalistic attitudes, particularly among Brazilian peasants, are the consequences of their socio-historical conditioning, low level of consciousness and lack of self-discovery. In his view:

Fatalism in the disguise of docility is the fruit of a historical and sociological situation, not an essential characteristic of a person's behaviour (Freire 1979; 47).

Third World commoners who are extremely religious-minded and traditionalistic in their lifestyle are very much impressed by the religious way of living. Religions generally help to sustain the existing order (Chinoy 1967:103). Keeping the spiritual aspects aside, most of the religious doctrines teach dogmatic principles and foster fatalistic attitudes (Goldhorpe 1984; Sagar 1975:219). That is why Marx has declared religion as opium for people. It keeps people docile and passive in the face of social injustice and oppression.

On a lower plane the religion (Hinduism) was characterized by fatalism; on the higher by inaction. There was little difference in the general effect of the two (Mishra 1962:37).

Keeping the orthodox Hinduism and its basic principle of unchangeable fate in mind, Weber considers it as the greatest hurdle on the way to economic development, and suggests a radical measure.

So long as the karma doctrine was unshaken, revolutionary ideas or progressivism were inconceivable (Weber 1962:123).

Conservatism: Conservatism simply means the adherence to old traditional systems and beliefs without any critical reasoning about their utility, validity and value in the modern world. Conservatism has always been a stronghold of religion.

It is not amazing that simple rural and urban folks with little contact with and exposure to the outside world are generally prone to it. They remain as old-fashioned as ever in their perceptions and behaviour. The most surprising fact is that many leaders and intellectuals in Third World countries, including some prominent and western-educated ones, also exhibit a certain degree of conservatism in their life style and behaviour. In India and Nepal, leaders may be seen with a team of astrologer-consultants who are supposed to advise them in state affairs. Similarly, they prefer to visit temples and attend religious rituals and ceremonies with an intention to project their public image as religious persons having regards for old customs and practices. In this way they succeed in popularising themselves among the gullible mass. The whole business is thus governed by a hidden political agenda rather than a religious motive.

In case of commoners they abide by old customs, values, rights and rituals because they do not know about alternatives or other choices available. They simply accept what were ascribed to them by their forefathers. During their lifetime, their socialisation process programmes or sets their minds in certain traditional values and conditions them to follow certain guidelines and modes of behaviour. Culture works as "residues from earlier epochs" (Worsley 1984:42).

Lavish living through borrowing

Kamalkhoj, inhabited by 30 thousand Danuwaras, lies in South-eastern part of Sindhuli District. Their ethnic characteristic behaviour shows that they are not futuristic. They have a bad social habit to take loans from local moneylenders and spend them lavishly in feasts, drinks and merrymaking. As a result they are being displaced from their own lands.

They neither send their children to schools nor get them inoculated. The number of literates is very low and infant mortality rate is high. Whenever these people suffer from diarrhoea or cholera, instead of going to doctors they prefer to consult *Dhamis/Jhankris*, i.e. local witchdoctors of their own clan.

(*Bal Sarokar Magazine*, Yr. 2, No. 819)

Conservatism also has a linkage with the belief in astral control over one's life events. In Hindu society this sort of cosmological faith still lingers on, but it is a carryover of the past age, not a recent phenomenon.

In India, belief in destiny, astrology, and horoscope-casting were widely diffused for a long time (Weber 1962:119-20).

The Hindus always were, and in their overwhelming majority still are, firm in their conviction that everything in their mundane existence is determined and controlled by the planets and stars (Chaudhuri 1979:201).

In a recent research conducted by a Nepalese economist among the Tamang community in the hilly regions of Nepal, one of the findings was:

The people in the area believe that when god gets angry, it reacts by way of making people ill or sending heavy rains and hailstones or causing landslides and other natural calamities and so on. Whenever such things happen, they make every effort to please god and do not care for the extent of expenses they will have to occur (Adhikari 1988:2).

I myself have witnessed similar things in the past. The Tamangs in the villages of Daman, Palung, Tistung and peripheral areas in eastern Nepal give a certain amount of food grains to *jhankris* or local witchdoctors every year with a belief that they will prevent probable hailstones and thus protect their crops from natural disaster.

More bizarre are the rituals of *yaznas* performed by Brahmins to avert famine and natural disasters, or to reestablish world peace. In these religious performances, tons of food grains, butter and other edibles are burnt in the poverty-stricken countries like India and Nepal.

Another paradox associated with conservatism can be seen in the institutions of asceticism and monasticism in some Asian countries. In India and Nepal, where more than one-third of the population live below the poverty line, many so-called *sadhus* (Hindu ascetics) and *Bhikhus* (Buddhist monks) live a parasitic life, enjoying almost every amenity at the cost of these wretched poor people. The Hindu *matha* (religious institutions) and Buddhist *gumbas* (monasteries) hold tremendous properties. In most cases they possess huge areas of land. That is why some *mahantas* (religious head of mathas) in a district of eastern Nepal devote more and more time to land management and business than in their spiritual duties (Wake, 1984:164). Keeping this fact in mind, Chaudhuri calls these establishments "secular landlordism" (1979:185) and Goldthorpe complains about the transference of national resources in "unproductive monasticism" (1984:11).

These references clearly show that in these countries asceticism no more remains a spiritual institution. Instead, in modern times opportunism and consumerism have overshadowed it. Therefore, it has been reduced merely to a rhetorical principle or a decorative showpiece, not an empirical way of life.

Most people, whatever their personal religious belief, nowadays are involved in the rat race of hoarding more and more money. People feign to be religious to cover up their double standard. Religion borders to hypocrisy.

Buruma has well-portrayed such ambivalence of character – showing off strict compliance to conservatism – in these illustrative lines:

Thai prostitutes who get up to antics that boggle the imagination – and yet wear the amulets of religion and donate money to Buddhist monks (Buruma 1990:125).

On the other hand, the doctrine of asceticism has become instrumental in the hands of elites to domesticate and pacify commoners in the Third World. In the name of religiousity people are often provoked to act fanatically or in a fundamentalistic way. They are more often deceived and exploited by preaching such a dictum of selfless service as:

Thou art entitled to work,
But never to its result.

(Bhagvada Gita, II, 47)

Among some African tribal groups, ascetic values are still highly regarded and strictly practised. Such values range from indifference to material affluence to the destruction of valuables in order to gratify their spiritual aspirations. For examples, the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) are reluctant to accumulate or admit wealth because of the fear of being bewitched (Pitt 1976:74). The Zuni (a branch of the Pueblos of New Mexico) are a people whose life is centred on religious ceremonial, being prosperous but without interest in economic advancement. On the other hand, the former Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island demonstrate what is almost a parody of industrial civilisation. At their potlatch ceremonies these people would compete with each other in burning and destroying their money and valuable possessions (Brown 1971:40).

Another feature of conservatism marks the meticulousness in observance of traditional social customs. For instance, in India and Nepal many poor folks spend more money in marriages, festivals, religious ceremonies and other rituals than they can afford. Consequently, in such activities they sometimes lose their land and property, and are reduced to further poverty and powerlessness (Chambers 1983; Adhikari 1988).

The general implications of conservative attitudes are multifarious and farfetched. The excessive reliance on supernatural forces diminishes the faith in human endeavour and perseverance. The overriding belief in traditional methods makes the breakthrough and dissemination of modern agricultural

techniques, medical practices and other radical changes among common folks in developing countries extremely difficult. Hence the slow pace of development.

Complacency leads to lethargy

This is a real event told to me by an experienced HMG officer, which clearly illustrates an attitude of complacency and self-created dependency.

The Nepal Government once provided local people in a food deficit area in far western region with rice in subsidised rate. After this these people slowed down their efforts in paddy cultivation. Unfortunately due to flood situation en route, when mules carrying food grain could not reach those villages on time, villagers starved.

Sometimes the adherence to dogmatic systems and values or conservative attitude and behaviour have caused disappearance of indigenous knowledge skills and technology. As I recall, my father once told me how in his boyhood he was cured of tuberculosis by a *Vaidya* (local physician) by means of traditional herbs when the disease was thought to be incurable all over the world. Similarly until today in Nepal some conservative craftsmen and painters hesitate to share their knowledge, skills and methods with others because of an old belief or hearsay that if handed over or transferred to an undeserving person, they would become ineffective and the former possessor would forget them. In this way a lot of invaluable knowledge and practices have become extinct. Otherwise, they could be useful assets for future generations and to the world at large.

Another dark aspect of conservatism is reflected in the negative male attitude towards women.

Anti-feminism (Sexism): Many conservative men in developing as well as developed nations consider authority over their wives as inalienable. Such a mentality unfailingly leads to male chauvinism. Let us look at this event that took place in modern Japan.

But I thought you were with us, part of the group... You're nothing but an ordinary foreigner after all!" Thus Juro Kara, a Japanese playwright, [rebuked] his friend Ian Buruma. Mr. Buruma had made the mistake of protesting when Mr Kara, drunk, threw a heavy ashtray at his wife (Buruma 1990:125).

How incredible that a present-day intellectual Japanese writer can look down upon his wife a woman as a subject for domination and humiliation.

The old gender discrimination or sexism still persists. Nor is it localised to a certain place or society. It seems more or less universal. However, it seems to be more severe in Third World societies where women's literacy rate is relatively lower; traditional values still dominate social behaviour; and a liberation movement of women is almost unknown. The domestication of women is taken as a natural phenomenon.

There is a dreadful apartheid of gender going on in the developing world that must be stopped (Newsweek, Mar 9, 1992: 23).

Women as salable commodity

Badis, a wandering tribe-like community in far western region of Nepal, earn their living or bread by performing dances in villages. Their girls and women are mostly involved in flesh trade. Treated by parents and even husbands as highly valuable and salable commodity, they are usually forced to take up the profession.

(Gautam 1993)

Parents who prefer to have a son treat their girl child as a second class citizen. Unlike a male child, she is subjected to a number of restrictions and taboos. Socialised or socially conditioned in this way, she gradually tends to internalise her sex-specific role prescriptions imposed upon her by the conservative society, and she builds a negative stereotyped self-image and feels herself inferior to man. This self-attitude gets expression in her self-imposed restrictions that delimit her freedom of choice and mobility to a great extent.

In most cases women's life is confined to a narrow domestic sphere. For instance, in Muslim societies men take a pride in keeping women in seclusion (Mair 1984:68). Even if some women get an opportunity to work outside, the ideology or sense of dependency makes them Vulnerable and open for exploitation in the hands of their employers (Bhasin 1985:190). They obtain less secure jobs, at lower pay, and with less opportunity of advancement than men (Young 1979:4).

At the national level too, very little has been done for women's development. Very few substantial projects have been launched to elevate women's socioeconomic status. The state, patriarchal in nature, shuns from their capacity building. In this way women's life-chances remain as limited as ever. They are either marginalised or dealt with as non-entities. Because projects are designed by men, women are invisible (Sharon in *Newsweek*, March 9, 1992).

Most planners, administrators and experts continue to have a male image of the Asian farmer (Bhasin 1985:206).

In such a situation, let alone not receiving an opportunity for personality development, projection of bright self-image or self dependence, women have mostly been deprived of even basic human needs and tangible social benefits. Consequently "It is women who usually account for the highest figures of illiteracy and lack of material and other resources on international statistical charts" (Leander 1985:26). The lack of opportunities or avenues has reduced them to powerlessness, which further reinforces their dependency on men. The lack of access to land, credit and financial and technological resources aggravates their position and work activities (Mukhopadhyay 1984:3).

Other agencies responsible for worsening the position and status of women in society are traditional social customs and institutions. The dowry system in India and southern parts of Nepal makes a girl a liability to her parents. Sometimes the father is subjected to increased penury, indebtedness and landlessness due to this system (Mukhopadhyay 1984:15; Chambers 1983:116). Similarly, in Africa and some parts of India and Nepal the custom of bride-price puts the freedom and movement of a bride at stake because the husband thinks that he has bought the authority over the girl (Mukhopadhyay 1984:15).

In the husband's house she is put under close scrutiny and many restrictions are imposed upon her. She is often surrounded by a host of do's and don'ts. This heavy domestic pressure and lack of freedom/mobility relatively narrows down her horizon and vision. Her mental or physical development is largely thwarted. Let us have a look at this typical taboo which illuminates the inhuman restrictions put on women in Malawi.

In Malawi this taboo prohibits pregnant women from eating meat, sugar or milk because it is feared that consuming these foods will transfer animal traits to the child. At the time when pregnant women most need these protein-rich foods, these taboos prevent their consumption (Colletta 1980:16).

Now the question is the reasons behind male sexist behaviour. Are men hostile towards women by their very nature? Are they also socioculturally conditioned and do they learn anti-feministic attitudes during their socialisation process?

Cultural factors, in the shape of mental attitude and traditional ethical systems are, what explain the behaviour of the majority of men (M'Bow, in Leander 1985:10).

Perhaps it is male ego, which makes men play a defensive role. So "When men are consulted on women's projects, tensions decrease significantly" (*Newsweek*, march 9, 1992, p. 28). Cultures and sub-cultures are generally moulded at the anvil of religion. Therefore, they are usually archetypal to it. It is more so in the case of Third World countries where the influence of religion and tradition is still stronger than in industrialised nations. Popular religion, by its very nature, is patriarchal or anti-feministic. In most societies, religious commandments have been responsible for strengthening and reinforcing anti-women social attitudes. For example, St. Paul advocates a woman for unconditional submission to man because "neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man" (Haralambos 1983:22). Similarly, Manu, a famous lawgiver of circa 200 b.c. in India, recommends for a state of perpetual dependency of woman on man. Tulsidas, the writer of the epic Ramayana in Hindi, goes so far as to declare: drums, Shudras (untouchables), bumpkins, and women ought to be subjected to beating.

Jewish Men even now thank god for not creating them as women. In some parts of India and western Nepal, there still exists a religious system to offer a daughter as a *devadasi* or *devaki* (maid-servant to god).

[Religions] continue to play the crucial role in south Asia in shaping ideology, and conditioning attitudes (Bhasin 1985:181).

Traditional religious beliefs are a powerful tool in the hands of those who are antagonistic to the improvement of women's position (Young 1979:30).

Apart from religious and social agents, popular mass media like books, films, comics and television also join hands with sociocultural and religious forces to perpetuate and promote the negative image of women in the society. These media generally project women as either ideal housewives or highly fashionable baby dolls or self-sacrificing and self-effacing mothers. A popular adage or message for women folks in Nepalese society goes like this: "to endure is equal to a thousand virtues."

More than male domination, such insensitivity to one's own afflictions and acceptance of self-degradation without any resentment does harm to women. More crucial are their own attitudes towards themselves, their own self-identification and their self-perceived locus and role in the society. They work as psychological barriers to their self-discovery. They cannot perceive their life positions as problematic. They hesitate to change their old lifestyle. This fear of breaking the myth leads them to the support of oppressive status quo.

A great many [of women] still fear a radical change... they have internalised the role historically allotted to them (M'Bow, in Leander 1985:10).

If we look back at the history, we see women are not so frail as portrayed by the media. Many women like Joan of Arc, Laxmi Bai (India) and Kirti Laxmi (Nepal) have immortalised their names through their heroic deeds. Many women scholars, scientists and thinkers have contributed, and are still contributing, substantially in enriching human knowledge and in human development. Women work much harder than men in Third World countries. The only need is to realise and unfold their tremendous latent potentiality. They ought to "discover a vision of life beyond that defined by social structures and networks of relationships" and "to create a new ethos" (Parikh and Garg 1989:14).

In Hindu society there is a curiously ambivalent attitude towards women, sometimes self-contradictory. For example, on the one hand, women are trifled by comparing with shoes or playthings. On the other hand, they are symbolically presented as such significant and powerful goddesses as Saraswati (learning), Laxmi (prosperity), Durga (power), and so on.

The Hindu tradition recognises and even reveres the Female Principle and elevates it to the status of a Divinity, while on the other hand it reviles the real flesh and blood women (Mukhopadhyay 1984:19).

An extreme example of woman power is Kumari – the Living Goddess, symbolising virginity and chastity – in Nepal, who every year symbolically bestows on the Nepalese Monarch the right to rule for the coming year (Anderson, quoted in Shrestha 1977:12).

However, the role and position of women vary from sub-culture to sub-culture even within the same country (Wake 1984:155-56; UNICEF 1987:163). In Nepal, housewives in hilly regions or in peasant families are freer and can enjoy better mobility and outside socialisation than women in higher families. For instance, the Tharu community in Nepal's Terai (plain) region still practises a matriarchal family system.

To recap, for women's underdevelopment women themselves are also responsible to some extent, for they "discriminate against themselves and consequently consider that the discrimination imposed upon them is justified and lose interest in the struggle to free themselves from it" (Leander 1985:26).

But the scene is changing gradually, though the pace may be slow. With growing literacy and exposure to outside world, Third World women's

awareness to their rights, gender equality, economic self-dependence, and need to self-empowerment is at high tide. They are coming forward to claim for their dues.

Conclusion

My prime concern here is to look into some main attitudinal causes for Third World non-development. This leads me to critically review the present situation where the poor and powerless are getting poorer and more powerless because of their being poorly networked and far from power centres (structure) and having almost zero access to resources (assets).

I have deliberately not touched upon such attitude-based problems as regionalism, racism, tribalism, ethnicism and fundamentalism, though their roles in causing internal fragmentation, frictions, conflicts and in-fightings cannot be ignored. Each calls for separate meticulous analysis.

Segal, while talking about social and psychological aspects of local development projects stresses on the need for structuring the social environment towards inducing modern behaviour, and on the importance of mediating variables, such as individual perceptions, attitudes, values and other personality factors (quoted in Sinha 1988:123).

Assuming the relevance of some of our traditional cultural values even in the modern age, instead of going radically as a reckless iconoclast, we better identify attitudes detrimental to development and opt for a middle path.

Our idea is not to direct development in terms of religion (attitudes and values) but only to use religions and moral symbols to achieve a more open and integrated society (Tripathi 1988:332).

In order to fight against fatalism and conservative attitudes, we must open up our closed minds to new views, visions and lateral thinking, and act accordingly. We can begin it with the dispersal of old hackneyed myths that keep us back. However, change (in attitude and behaviour) should begin from the individual, by revolutionizing one's own mind and anchoring it to the right direction. One should believe in one's capability to change one's own world.

In order to get rid of the caste system and anti-feminism, women and lower caste people ought to come together, build a countervailing force and fight unitedly to get their entity established. They must empower themselves to be free from age-old shackles of humiliation and calculated deprivation. Education leading to self-awareness and conscientization can be a powerful tool. Strengthening their networks, becoming economically self-dependent and taking places in the power structure can be other steps for self-

empowerment. This is possible only if they form a sound and appropriate attitudinal base – towards themselves and the world at large – and throw away the yoke of age-old inhibitions. They must come out of their hard shell.

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**GENDER PARTICIPATION IN THE MILK
PRODUCER ASSOCIATIONS: A SITUATIONAL
ANALYSIS FROM THE EASTERN
DEVELOPMENT REGION OF NEPAL**

K.D. Mishra

Introduction

Nowadays, there is a widespread concern in gender studies over women's exploitation, oppression and domination by patriarchy in the Nepalese society. Gender generally refers to the complex process by which male and female become socially men and women, affecting their own actions, desires and wishes. It also refers to the masculine and feminine genders which are also known to be a product of the social organization of the sexes into two distinct categories: men and women.

The data are derived from fieldwork carried out in January 1992 in the four districts of the Eastern Development Region: Morang, Sunsari, Jhapa and Ilam. Twelve milk producer associations (MPAs) in these districts are taken as a basis for the situational analysis. The paper deals with the Gender role in the Peasant farm household. It further focuses Gender role in the milk producer associations mainly consisting of milk production, milk processing and milk marketing. Finally, the paper is based on the situational background and recommendations made for the MPAs which are summarised in the conclusion.

Gender in the Peasant Farm Household

Men and women activities differ geographically to regionally by caste, and by society. Boserup (1970) identified African countries where women work to produce food crops for domestic subsistence and men work in production of cash crops for the market sale. She further identifies that in the developing countries women are found to be engaged in the income generating activities, explaining why the poorer the households the greater the farm work and income generating activities hours of women are clearly observed.

Whitehead (1984) reported of "Conjugal Contact" which means exchange of goods, services, incomes and labour between husband and wife in the household. The Status of Women in Nepal (1981) reported that women spend

long working hours in relation to animal husbandry, crop production, gathering firewood, food processing, walking a long distance to fetch water in pots, grinding the grains, house cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and child bearing activities. This statement might be supported if a meaningful survey is conducted at the farm level during the peak agricultural season where women are found to work about 11 to 12 hours per day (UNDP, issue paper, 1980). *Foreign Aid and Women* (1983) also reported that the women contribute more to household activities than men.

A recent study conducted in 1992 by UNICEF on the status of women and children in Nepal reported that the son preference and the gender disparity, a human indicator, in Nepal is the highest in the world. In fact, Nepal is one of the few countries which has lower life expectancy for women. Son preference is highest and gender disparity worst.

The above mentioned reports support the argument that women's work done at home is always higher than men. But, where the access in terms of land registration, credit, training and income are concerned, men are always the privileged group in the peasant farm household. Different studies conducted in different parts of the world report the clear picture of the work hour per day in the peasant farm households by each man and woman (Table 1).

Table 1: Working Hour per Day by Each Men and Women in Household and Income Earning Activities

Source of Data	Working hour per day			
	Household Activities		Income earning Activities	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Uganda	0.43	6.15	N.A.	N.A.
2. Upper Volta	0.46	7.19	N.A.	N.A.
3. Philippines	1.70	6.33	7.44	2.33
4. Nepal	1.29	6.68	N.A.	N.A.
5. Bangladesh	0.22	5.10	7.04	1.61
6. Java	1.35	6.65	10.32	3.20

Note: The studies were carried out according to number by the following researchers and the year of their studies: (1) Hanger - 1973, (2) Mesweeney - 1979, (3) Evenson et al. (4) Acharya and Bennett - 1982, (5) Cain et al. 1979, and Hart - 1980.

Source : Frank Ellis (1988).

The studies report about the working hour per day by each man and woman where men's participation is less at the household level in comparison to women, whereas women participation is also found less in the income earning activities in comparison to men. In some case studies, men's participation is less than one hour per day at the household level whereas women participation is more than 7 hours. In the case of Bangladesh, men's participation is less than an hour at the household level, whereas women are seen hardly more than one hour in the income generating activities.

When the sixth five year plan was introduced in the country, the women and their participation in development programmes and projects were prominent. Women were made the target group, but integration of women was lacking in development programmes and projects. The seventh five year plan included certain modifications to integrate women in development efforts. Now, the eighth five year plan is making tremendous efforts for integrating women into development programmes and projects, and a lot of INGOs and NGOs are mushrooming in the country in the name of women. But due to lack of communication, co-ordination and integration among ministries, departments, Social Welfare Council and even between INGOs and NGOs, women development has not been achieving positive results, and even gender disparity has also not been reduced in the country.

Gender in the Milk Producer Associations (MPAs)

The origin and initiation of MPAs are found to be developed by the Dairy Development Corporation (DDC) to collect and procure milk a group benefit as well as the benefit to members. Actually, DDC provides a commission for the total volume of milk sold to milk supply scheme (MSS). The formation of MPAs is based on cooperative principles on paper, but it differentiates in practice. If these MPAs can be institutionalised according to a cooperative principle, the socio-economic conditions of the rural people can be enhanced whether they are residing within the MPAs' command area or outside of it by providing a management system for selling cattle feeds, medicines for livestock and basic consumer goods.

Twelve MPAs are taken from the four districts from the Eastern Development Region for analysis and presentation here (Table 2). These MPAs are from different locations within the districts of Morang, Sunsari, Jhapa and Ilam.

The continuous development of MPAs is a positive sign in the rural milk producing areas for the milk collection programme of the DDC. There are a few MPAs which have very good management systems and are effectively expanding their activities. During the field survey, the Itahari, Sukrabare and

Salakpur MPAs were assessed managerially, financially and economically effective.

Table 2: Summary of Twelve Sampled MPAs

S. No.	Name of MPAs	Year of Establishment	Idea Origination ¹	Beneficiary House holds	Total General Members ²		Total Executive Members		Total Participation ³
					Men	Women	Men	Women	
1.	Letang	1984-85	SFDP	184	181	3	9	—	184
2.	Salakpur	1980-81	DDC	300	270	30	9	—	300
3.	Sukrabare	1981-82	DDC	107	103	4	9	—	107
4.	Itahari	1980-81	DDC	123	97	26	8	1	123
5.	Damak	1988-89	LFG	71	66	5	9	—	71
6.	Taragaon	1989-90	DDC	84	68	16	9	—	84
7.	Samal bung	1989-90	DDC	45	35	10	9	—	45
8.	Mangalbare	1988-89	DDC	221	206	15	9	—	221
9.	Arthetar	1990-91	DDC	62	50	12	9	—	62
10.	Baghbire	1987-88	DDC	42	41	1	9	—	42
11.	Boudhan	1990-91	DDC	157	153	4	9	—	157
12.	Harkate	1990-91	DDC	121	100	21	8	1	121

1. SFDP = Small Farmers Development Project
DDC = Dairy Development Corporation
LFG = Livestock Farming Group
2. Each household represents one male or female member.
3. Gender includes both men and women participation as a member.

Agriculture is known as a principal occupation of the beneficiary households. The distribution of land holding among members as unequal. Medium and small farmers couldn't earn their livelihood from the land alone, so they adopted the livestock farming system as a subsidiary and supplementary occupation. In the livestock farming, not only medium and small farmers were involved but large farmers, particularly high castes, as well.

The beneficiaries had positive feelings towards the MPAs, though most of them have been unable to be more conscious about the objectives and working procedures of them due to lack of on-going awareness programmes at the MPA level. Thus dairy farmers have not been able to derive the expected benefits. During the field survey, most of the dairy farmers responded for strengthening the timely availability of inputs (cattle feed and

medicines for livestock). Emphasis was also given to increasing the female participation. The MPAs have eliminated the exploitation of middlemen by strengthening their capacity to provide feeds, medicines for livestock, fertilizer for crops and basic consumer goods to their members. These MPAs are needed to be merged in a cooperative form in the near future.

Milk Production: Gender participation in the twelve sampled MPAs has been classified under following headings: milk production, processing and marketing. Here, milk production is basically analyzed under three subheadings:

(A) **Grazing:** Grazing was basically done by family members in Salakpur, Sukrabare, Letang, Itahari and Damak MPAs, and in the remaining MPAs livestock's were staff-fed. Generally grazing hours differ according to the season (rainy and winter and availability of persons in the household. Mostly males and children were seen to be involved in grazing practices. They devoted an average of 2 hours per day whereas females devoted 1 hour per day.

(B) **Fodder Collection:** Fodder collection was mostly done by female members while less participation was found among males and children. generally, females devoted 2 hours per day whereas male and children each devoted 1 hour per day.

(C) **Livestock Management at Home:** Looking after livestock at home includes feeding, milking, cleaning animals and stalls, and preparing concentrates involves a much participation of females at home. Livestock are fed and maintained by women in the hills and by men in the Tarai. But women clean the containers and maintain the quality of milk for sale. The table given below shows that women devoted 2 hours per day while men hour per day and children devoted a half an hour per day to look after livestock at home.

Milk Processing: The produced milk of the members was sold directly to the MPAs. Very few households were found to be engaged in preparing milk products, i.e., curd and ghee. These products were prepared only for the domestic consumption. Women's participation was found to be high where milk products were made. The MPAs have solved the problem of milk marketing and providing cash to its members at their doors. This cash payment is given to them after 15 days.

Women's involvement was found to be negligible, about half an hour per day, whereas men's and children's involvement was not seen in milk processing.

Milk Marketing: Women have less input in the sale of milk, and only male members were found to be involved. Decisions were made by both about where and what amount of milk has to be sold. Either children, females or males carried milk to the MPAs' collection points. Here, milk marketing is related only to the sale of milk by the consultation of females at home.

Children devoted about half an hour per day, while males and females devoted less than half an hour per day for selling milk to the MPAs' collection points. One who is involved always depends upon the availability of time and persons in the households. This work was generally done by children under 15 years (Table 3).

Table 3: Estimated Average Time per Household per day Devoted by each Male, Female and Children for Milk Production, Processing and Marketing

Gender Participation	Grazing ¹	Fodder Collection	Management of Livestock at Home ²	Processing ³	Marketing (sale of milk)
Male	2	1	1	—	0.15
Female	1	2	2	0.30	0.15
Children	2	1	0.30	—	0.30
Total	5	4	3.30	0.30	1.00

This table is derived from the study on financial and management feasibility studies of MPAs participation in Dairy Business.

1. Few animals were grazed at Salakpur, Sukhrabare, Letang, Itahari and Damak MPAs, remaining MPAs livestock's were stall fed.
2. Feeding, milking, preparing concentrate (maize + pina) and cleaning the animals and their stalls.
3. Produced milk was directly sold to the MPAs, very less quantity was processed in few households only for the domestic consumption.

Conclusion

The situational analysis of MPAs shows that the importance of rural women both in domestic and production activities is relevant to the policy of research, since rural development programmes and projects are designed in the

country. Here it relates to the livestock sector under MPAs where high priority has been given to gender inequality in relation to the different operations of the MPAs.

According to the analysis of different aspects of men's and women's participation in MPAs activities the following concrete recommendations are proposed.

- (a) Before formation of MPAs, awareness programmes should be launched for both men and women members in relation to the MPAs activities.
- (b) Men and women should be basically stratified according to land holdings, caste and religion. On the basis of the above stratification, men and women can be easily separated and organized under MPAs for cow, buffalo, pig, poultry and sheep rearing.
- (c) Under the MPAs, primarily the women members should be facilitated for training, credit and extension activities.
- (d) The participation of women members should be increased both among the general members and the executive members.
- (e) Micro-level enterprises managed by rural women can be initiated at the local level by adopting grassroots schemes (i.e., locally made concentrates based on maize+pina).
- (f) Finally, gender has been recognized as an important indicator of economic, social and political roles. Therefore, there is a special need for special policies targeted basically to the rural women in general, and women members under MPAs in particular, for adult education, training, technology and credit facilities.

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नेपालका प्राचीन गणेशमूर्ति

मोहनप्रसाद खनाल
ने.ए.अ.के.त्रि.वि.

नेपाली मूर्तिकलाको क्षेत्रमा सर्वमान्य तथा लोकप्रिय देवप्रतिमाका रूपमा गणेशमूर्ति देखिएको छ। विघ्नविनाशक माङ्गल्यका एकमात्र दाता गणेश वा गणपतिको आज सर्वत्र अग्रपूजा र सम्मान प्राप्त छ। देवतै देवता वा मन्दिरै मन्दिर भएको देश या नगर मानिने नेपालका प्रायः प्रत्येक गाउँ टोल र मन्दिरका वरपर अथवा सामुन्नेमा गणेशको सानै भए पनि मूर्ति स्थापना गर्ने परम्परा भएको पाइन्छ। त्यस्तै घरघरमा गरिने पंचदेवोपासनामा गणेश हुनु अनिवार्य नै छ। पितृकार्यको अतिरिक्त प्रत्येक शुभ कार्यको आरम्भमा गणपतिको स्मरण वा पूजा अनिवार्य मानिन्छ। तर वेद तथा उपनिषद्को प्रारम्भ गणपतिको स्मरणबाट भएको छैन। स्मृति पुराणहरूमा पनि यस्तो कुनै संकेत पाइँदैन। रामायण र महाभारतको थालनी पनि "श्री गणेशाय नमः" बाट भएको छैन। यहाँ सम्म कि पछि बनेका कतिपय पुराणहरूमा समेत आदि श्लोक गणपतिलाई नमस्कार नगरिकनै शुरू गरिएको छ। मध्यकालका शुरूताकाका शिलालेखहरूको यही स्थिति छ। ललितविस्तार आदि ग्रन्थहरूमा जो उपास्य देवताका सूची पाइन्छ, त्यस्ता ग्रन्थहरूमा पनि गणेशको कुनै संकेत सम्म पाइँदैन। अन्य देवताहरू सरह प्राचीनकालमा गणेशको स्वतन्त्र संप्रदाय वा परंपरा भएको कुनै दृढ प्रमाण छैन। वेदमा पनि गणेशका वारेमा एउटा सूक्तसम्म पनि पाइँदैन। "गणानांत्वा गणपति" को जुन सूक्त ऋग्वेदमा छ, त्यो गजानन, गणेशका लागि नभएर देवादिगणका पति अर्थात् ब्रह्मणस्पति का लागि रचिएको मन्त्र हो भन्ने विद्वानहरूको मत छ।^१ त्यस्तै वाजसनेयी संहिताको "गणानांत्वा गणपति हवामहे" सुक्तको सम्बन्ध पनि अश्वमेधको घोडाका निमित्त हो भन्ने कुरा स्पष्ट छ।^२

वैदिक कालपछि का ब्राम्हणकाल र उपनिषदकालका साहित्यमा पनि गणेश व गजाननका वारेमा कुनै संकेतसम्म पाइँदैन। तर सूत्रकालमा भने रूद्र र रूद्रकी पत्नी अम्बिकाका साथ एउटा नविन तथा रहस्यमय देवता 'विनायक' सम्बन्धि महत्वपूर्ण प्रसंग प्राप्त छ।^३ मानव गृह्य सूत्रको एक ठाउँमा चार विनायकको नाम शालकटंकट, कूष्माण्ड राजपुत्र, उस्मित र देवयजन बताइएको छ।^४ वास्तवमा यी विनायक देवयोनीका नभएर भूतयोनीका देखिएका छन्। त्यसैले यिनीहरूको प्रसंग अहितकारी, उपद्रवी अर्थात् भयावह जीवका रूपमा आएको हो। परन्तु बोधायन गृह्यसूत्र मा एउटा अर्को विनायकको चर्चा

पाइन्छ। जो विघ्नकारीबाट विघ्नपति भएका छन् र अब विघ्नविनाशका लागि स्मरण गरिने विधान छ तापनि यिनको क्रूर स्वभावले गर्दा विधिवत अर्चना पछि उसलाई अन्तकतै टाढा जान प्रार्थना गरिन्छ।^५ परन्तु कालान्तरमा यिनको यो भयावह स्वभावको स्मृति समाजबाट हराउँदै गयो र यिनी विघ्नहन्ता एवं विघ्नविनाशकका रूपमा पूजिन थाले। गृह्यसूत्रका यी विनायक धर्मसूत्रमा आएर हस्तिमुख, वक्रतुण्ड तथा लम्बोदर आदि उपाधिद्वारा विभूषित हुन पुगे। जो रूद्रगण एवं भूतगण आदिका लक्षण मानिन्छन्।

बोधायन गृह्यसूत्रमा एउटी देवीका साथ यिनको साहचर्य बताइएको छ, जसको नाम हो जेष्ठा। विनायककै समान यिनलाई पनि हस्तिमुखा भनिएको छ र यिनको स्वभाव पनि क्रूर अर्थात् विनायककै समाननै भएको पाइन्छ।^६

रूद्रका साथ मरूद्रगणको उल्लेख सर्व विदितनै छ। यिनै मरूद्रगणका स्वामी गणपतिका नामले प्रशिद्ध थिए। विभिन्न गण तथा भूतहरू संग रूद्र-सहचर्य भएको प्रमाण वैदिक साहित्यमा उपलब्ध छ। यिनै भूत अथवा गणहरू मध्येका विनायक भूतविनायकका नामले प्रशिद्ध थिए। जसलाई बोधायन गृह्यसूत्र मा भूतपति, भूपति, भूतानांपति र भूवनपतिको उपाधिले विभूषित गरिएको छ।^७ यी सबै उपाधिहरू रूद्रका लागि प्रयुक्त भएको तथ्य वैदिक साहित्यमा वर्णित छ। यसरी वैदिक कालका रूद्र र सूत्रकालका विनायकको तादात्म्यता वा एकात्मता भएको प्रमाण कृष्ण तथा शुक्ल यजुर्वेद को ज्यम्बकहोम र शतरूद्रीय सूक्तमा पाइन्छ।^८ यसै शिलसिलामा रूद्रको विशेष वाहन मूषक (मुसा) को प्रसंग बढो अर्थपूर्ण छ। यसको अतिरिक्त बोधायन गृह्य-सूत्रमा विनायकलाई 'उग्र' र 'भीम' भनिएको छ^९ जो वैदिक संहितामा यो रूद्रको उपाधि थियो। त्यस्तै महाभारत तथा पुराणहरूमा शिवलाई गणपति,^{१०} गजेन्द्र कर्ण, लम्बोदर, दंष्ट्रिन भन्ने जस्ता गणेशका विशेषण लगाइएको छ।^{११} भने अन्य पुराणहरूमा शिवका 'त्रिपुरान्तक, त्रिलोचन, भालचन्द्र र 'ईश' आदि विशिष्ट उपाधिहरूले गणेशलाई सम्मानित गरिएको छ।^{१२} यसबाट सूत्रकालका 'विनायक' नै वैदिक रूद्रको अर्को एउटा रूप थियो भन्ने कुरा स्पष्ट हुन्छ। वैदिक रूद्रको यो स्वरूप नै पछिल्ला कालमा आएर एउटा स्वतन्त्र देवताका रूपमा विकसित हुन पुग्यो। जो शुरूमा रूद्र, त्यसपछि विनायक र कालान्तरमा आएर गणेशका नामले विख्यात भयो। त्यसैले सौर पुराणमा गणेशनै वास्तवमा शिव हुन् भन्ने कुरा स्पष्टसंग लेखिएको छ।^{१३}

यसरी गणेशको शिवसंगको तादात्म्यता प्राचीनकाल देखिनै भएको पाइन्छ तापनि "गणपत्यर्थव" शीर्षमा स्पष्टतया गणेशलाई शिव-सुत भनिएको छ। शिवसंग गणेशको एकात्मता भएको अर्को वलियो प्रमाण यो पनि छ, त्यो हो शिवको समान गणेशको लिङ्ग प्रदर्शन र गजाननका निधारमा देखिने तेस्रो आँखा जो गणेशका केही मूर्तिहरूमा स्पष्ट देखिन्छ।

पुराण र प्राचीन साहित्यहरूमा गणेशलाई शिवपुत्र भनिएको प्रसंग माथिनै भनियो। त्यसैले उमा र महेश्वरका साथ गणेशको सामिप्य देखाइनु स्वाभाविक कुरा हो। तर मूर्तिकलामा भने उमामहेश्वरका गणसहितका मूर्तिहरूमा गणेशको स्थान गौण रूपमा

देखाइएको छ र कुमारको स्थान र स्थिति भने भव्य तथा ओज पूर्ण देखिन्छ। त्यसैले उमा-महेश्वरका मूर्तिहरूमा गणेशलाई शिवपरिवार भित्र नराखी शिवगणका लहरमा राखेको स्पष्ट छ।

यसै प्रसंगमा अब गणेशमूर्तिबारे विचार गरौं। प्रतिमा लक्षण संग सम्बद्ध अनेक ग्रन्थहरू चतुर्भुज, षड्भुज र अष्टादशभुज आदि बहुभुज गणेशको वर्णन गर्दछन्। यस प्रकारको विशेष विवेचना गणेश पुराणमा पाइन्छ। यी मध्ये चतुर्भुज प्रतिमा वढि लोकप्रिय छ। यसको अतिरिक्त द्विभुज गणेशका मूर्तिहरू पनि पाइएका छन् जो चतुर्भुज, अष्टभुज, दशभुज आदि गणेशमूर्तिहरू भन्दा निःसन्देह प्राचीनत प्रतीत हुन्छन्। साहित्यमा द्विभुज गणेश प्रतिमाको दुई ठाउँमा मात्र उल्लेख छ। पहिलो बृहत्संहितामा^{१४} र दोस्रो गणेशपुराणको कलिपूज्य गणेशको वर्णन गर्दाको समयमा^{१५} यसमा निःसन्देह बृहत्संहिताको उल्लेख प्राचीन हो। जसअनुसार गणेशको हातमा परशु र मूला हुनु अनिवार्य छ।

लिच्छविकालका गणेश बारे उल्लेख भएका शिलालेखहरू पाइएका छैनन्। त्यसैले नेपालमा गणेश मूर्तिहरूको स्वतन्त्र अस्तित्व वा पूजा कहिलेदेखि चल्यो यसबारे किटेर भन्न गाह्रो थियो। तर अब हामी त्यस स्थितिमा छैनौं। काठमाडौं उपत्यका भित्र लिच्छवि कालमा बनेका अभिलिखित गणेश मूर्तिहरू पाइएका छन्^{१६} यस्ता महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धिले हाम्रा विचार र धारणाहरूमा ठूलो परिवर्तन ल्याएका छन्। यिनै परिवर्तित विचार तुलनात्मक अध्ययन र प्रमाणका आधारमा हामीले स्वतन्त्र गणेश मूर्तिको परम्परालाई लिच्छविकालको चरमोत्कर्ष युगभन्दा पनि अझ अगाडिसम्म लान सकेका हौं।

काठमाडौं उपत्यकामा अहिलेसम्म गणेशका १८ वटा प्राचीनतम मूर्तिहरू पाइएका छन्। जसमध्ये अभिलेखयुक्त गणेशका प्राचीन मूर्तिको संख्या दुई छ तापनि यी मूर्तिहरू लगभग पाँचौं देखि सातौं शताब्दि बीचका देखिन्छन्। मोदकपात्र सहित दुइहातका अतिरिक्त एकदन्ती, लम्बोदर इत्यादि प्रारम्भिककालका गणेशप्रतिमाका खास लक्षण हुन्। यस्ता मूर्तिकलामा पाइने निम्नलिखित विशेषताहरू प्रति सावधानीका साथ विचार गर्नु आवश्यक छ।

१. गणेशको मस्तक मुकुट रहित प्राकृतिक हात्तीको छ।
२. सबै मूर्तिहरूका २ हात छन्।
३. अलंकार रहित गणेशको शरीर स्थूल हुनुका साथै लम्बोदर छ।
४. प्रायः सबै मूर्तिहरू अर्ध पर्यकासनमा छन्।
५. गणेशको सूड केही वायाँ तर्फ घुमी देब्रेहातको मोदकपात्र माथि अडेको छ।
६. सबै मूर्तिहरू सर्प- यज्ञोपवीत द्वारा आवद्ध छन्।
७. वायाँ हातमा रहेको मोदकपात्रको अतिरिक्त दायाँ हातमा फल वा मूला छ।
८. गणेशका साथमा उनका कुनै पनि पार्षद वा परिवार छैनन्। यहाँ सम्म कि उनको वाहन मुसाको समेत दर्शन पाईदैन।
९. सबै नै मूर्ति एकदन्ती छन्।
१०. हातका बालाको अतिरिक्त आभूषणको सर्वथा अभाव छ।

माथि उल्लेख गरिएका विशेषताहरूलाई दृष्टिगत गर्दै प्रामाणिक आधारमा यस्ता मूर्तिहरू वारे विचार गर्नु आवश्यक छ।

यसै सन्दर्भमा कागेश्वरी, मणिचूड र नालामा गरी गणेशका तीन वटा दुर्लभ र प्राचीन मूर्तिहरू पाइएका छन्। लिच्छविकालीन गणेशका यी मूर्तिहरू अहिलेसम्म प्राप्त भएका अन्य गणेश मूर्तिहरू भन्दा अलि वेग्लै र चाख लाग्दा छन्। यस मध्ये पनि कागेश्वरी स्थित गणेशमूर्ति शैली, बनोट र लिपिका आधारमा प्राचीनतम देखिएको छ (चित्र नं. १)। त्यसैले यस्ता मूर्तिलाई आधार मानेर अन्य गणेश मूर्तिका बारेमा चर्चा गर्नु उपयुक्त हुनेछ।

मुकुट रहित मूर्तिको शिर प्राकृतिक हात्तीको छ। द्विभुज गणेशको दायाँ हातमा मूला र बायाँ हातमा मोदकले भरिएको पात्र छ। गणेशको तुण्ड केही वायाँ तर्फ घुमी मोदकपात्र माथि गएर अडेको छ। हातमा भएको वालाको अतिरिक्त शरीरमा कुनै पनि आभूषणको प्रयोग भएको छैन। अर्धपर्यंक आसनमा विराजमान यस मूर्तिमा सर्प- यज्ञोपवीत देखिन्छ। समष्टि रूपमा भन्ने हो भने साँखु, (चित्र नं. ४) टंगाल, हाडिगाउँ, (चित्र नं. ५) पाटनढोका, यंगाल (चित्र नं. ६) र पशुपति (चित्र नं. ७) आदि ठाउँमा प्राप्त गणेश मूर्तिकै समान यस मूर्तिको शैली, ढाँचा र बनोटमा त्यति अन्तर देखिदैन। तर अहिले सम्म पाइएका अन्य सबै गणेश मूर्तिका वायाँ हातमा फल जस्तो कुनै वाटुलो वस्तु देखिन्छ भने यस मूर्तिको दायाँ हातले मूला लिएको स्पष्ट छ जुन "प्रमथाधिपो गजमुखः प्रलम्ब जठर विभ्रन्मूलक दण्ड" आदि शास्त्रको वचन अनुरूप छ।^{१७} त्यति मात्र होइन यस गणेशमूर्तिको अर्को चाख लाग्दो पक्ष हो लिङ्ग प्रदर्शन, जो समकालीन अन्य गणेश मूर्तिहरूमा पाइँदैन। यसको अतिरिक्त अहिलेसम्म पाइएका मूर्तिहरूमध्ये यसको विशेष महत्व छ। त्यो हो गणेशको पादपीठमा भएको लिच्छवि अभिलेख। जसलाई लिपिका आधारमा पूर्व लिच्छविकालीन अर्थात् ईशाको पाँचौँ शताब्दिताका राख्न सकिन्छ। अभिलेख सहितको यति पुरानो गणेशमूर्ति भारतमा समेत दुर्लभ मानिन्छ। जवकि अफगानिस्तानको काबुल नजिकै पीर रतननाथ दरगाहमा प्राप्त गुप्तकालीन 'महा-विनायक' मूर्तिलाई छाडेर अभिलेखाङ्कित गणेशका प्राचीन मूर्तिहरू भारतमा पनि पाइएका छैनन्। त्यसैले भारतीय उप-महाद्वीपमा नै दुर्लभ मानिने यस मूर्तिको प्राप्तिलाई ठूलो उपलब्धि मान्नु पर्छ।

अब भारतका गणेशमूर्ति वारे पनि चर्चा गरौं। त्यहाँका मूर्तिहरू मध्ये मथुराको संकिसामा रहेको गणेशमूर्तिनै अहिले सम्ममा सबैभन्दा पुरानो अर्थात् प्रारम्भिक गुप्तकालको भएको विश्वास गरिन्छ।^{१८} त्यसपछि मथुरा संग्रहालयमा संग्रहित १५-७५८, १५-७९२ र १५-१०६४ संख्याका मूर्तिहरूको क्रम देखा पर्दछ। यी सबै मूर्तिहरू द्विभुज हुनुका साथै लम्बोदर छन्। गणेशको सूँड वायाँतर्फ घुमेर मोदकपात्र माथि गएर अडेको छ। सर्प- यज्ञोपवीत वाहेक वस्त्र तथा आभूषणको विलकुलै अभाव छ।

यस पछिका अन्य मूर्तिहरू जुन लगभग गुप्तकालताकाका भन्ने विश्वास गरिन्छ, ती हुन् उदयगिरी, अहिच्छत्रा,^{१९} देवगढ^{२०} र राजघाट (वाराणसी) आदि ठाउँमा प्राप्त गणेश मूर्तिहरू, जो प्रायः स्थानक अर्थात् उभिएको अवस्थाका छन्। तीमध्ये पनि संकिसामा प्राप्त र मथुरा संग्रहालयको संख्या १५-७५८ (चित्र नं. ८) को साथै उदयगिरी ६ नं गुफाको

आसनस्थ मूर्ति विशेष अवलोकनीय छ। यहाँ गणेशको नग्न रूप अर्थात् लिङ्ग देखाइएको छ। जुन अन्य गणेश मूर्तिहरूमा विरलै पाइन्छ। यसको साथ साथै मध्य प्रदेश र दक्षिण भारतको वेगी नामक स्थानका द्विभुज गणेशको उल्लेख पनि आवश्यक छ।

माथि चर्चा गरिएका गणेशमूर्ति मध्ये अफगानिस्तानको काबुल नजिकै रतननाथ दरगाहमा पूजित गणेशमूर्तिको पादपीठमा तिथि, मिति रहित पछिल्लो गुप्तकालीन लिपिमा लेखिएको अभिलेख प्राप्त छ।^{२२} तापनि उक्त मूर्ति शैली, बनोट र ढाँचाका आधारमा कागेश्वरी स्थित नेपाली गणेशमूर्ति भन्दा पछाडिको भएको कुरा निम्नांकित तथ्यले स्पष्ट गर्दछ।

१. मूर्तिको शिर प्राकृतिक हात्तीको जस्तो छैन।
२. टाउकोमा शिरस्त्राण अर्थात् मुकुट पहिरीएको छ।
३. कान साना हुनुको साथै मानवाकारको छ।
४. सँड छोटो अर्थात् मुख तर्फनै दिएको देखाइएको छ।
५. गलामा सुन्दर दानादार हार देखिन्छ।
६. सर्प- यज्ञोपवीतको साथै माथिल्लो पेटमा डोरी अथवा सानो पटुका बाँधिएको छ।
७. कटीमा बाघाम्वरको संगै ऊर्ध्व लिङ्ग देखिन्छ।

यस प्रकार माथि उल्लेखित (चित्र नं. ९) मूर्तिमा पछिल्लाकालमा पाइने लक्षणहरू विद्यमान छन्। त्यसैले यो मूर्ति कागेश्वरी स्थित नेपाली गणेश मूर्तिभन्दा पछाडिको देखिन्छ।

कागेश्वरी स्थित गणेशमूर्तिको महत्व र विशेषता बारे विचार गर्दा यसको पादपीठमा भएको अभिलेखका विषयमा चर्चा गर्नु आवश्यक छ। जसले तात्कालिक मूर्तिकलाका साथै सामाजिक इतिहासको दृष्टिले पनि महत्व राख्दछ।

नेपालमा प्राचीन काल देखिनै वर्ण व्यवस्था थियो। लिच्छविकालमा चार वर्ण र अठार जातका मानिसहरू वसोवास गर्दथे।^{२३} यी मध्ये लिच्छवि, कोली, वृजिक, मल्ल, शाक्य र आभिर वा गुप्त आदि थर गोत्र भएका मानिसहरूको उल्लेख पाइन्छ।^{२४} त्यसैले यस अभिलेखमा एकजना बजिक (वृजिक) ले यो मूर्ति स्थापना गरी ५० खेत गुठी राखेको प्रसंग छ।^{२५}

माथि उल्लेखित गणेशमूर्ति पछि अब बनोट, परंपरा र स्थितिका हिसावले मणिचूड पोखरी नजिकैको एउटा सानो मन्दिरमा स्थापित गणेश मूर्तिवारे विचार गर्नु आवश्यक छ। खैरो बलौटे ढुङ्गामा निर्मित यो (चित्र नं. २) मूर्ति ईशाको छैठौँ शताब्दीको प्रतीत हुन्छ। जुन मूर्तिमा समकालीन अरू गणेश मूर्तिहरूको भन्दा शैलीगत आधारमा केही भिन्नता पाइन्छ। हुन त गणेशका प्राय सबै पुराना मूर्तिहरू लगभग एकै प्रकारका देखिने हुँदा यिनीहरूवारे पृथक पहिचान गर्नु त्यति सजिलो छैन तापनि परंपरागत बनोट, शैली र बसेको स्थिति एवं हातमा लिएका वस्तु आदिका हिसावले यस्ता मूर्तिहरू बीच देखापर्ने

भिन्नता प्रति ध्यान जानु स्वभाविकै हो। त्यसैले यो मूर्तिमा देखिएको शैलीगत भिन्नता प्रति निम्नाङ्कित कुराहरूले हाम्रा ध्यान आकृष्ट गर्दछन्।

१. समकालीन अन्य गणेश मूर्तिका दाँजोमा यो मूर्ति स्थूल छैन।
२. यस मूर्तिको गलामा सामान्य प्रकारको हार देखिन्छ।
३. गणेशमूर्तिको दायाँ हातले वीजपूरक अर्थात् विभिरो लिएको छ। जो अन्य समकालीन मूर्तिहरूमा पाइँदैन। यसको अतिरिक्त अन्य मूर्तिहरूमा कुनै वाटुलो फल वा मूला देखिन्छन्।
४. अर्ध-पर्यक आसनमा यो मूर्ति दायाँ गोडा टेकी बायाँ गोडा पलेटी मारेको अवस्थामा बसेको छ। जो अरू मूर्तिको ठीक उल्टो देखिन्छ।

यसरी यो मूर्ति समकालीन अन्य गणेश भन्दा भिन्न देखिन्छ तापनि चाँगुको छिन्नमस्ता मन्दिर भित्र प्राप्त सातौं शताब्दिको अभिलेखयुक्त गणेशमूर्तिको वसाई र यसको वसाईको स्थितिमा कुनै अन्तर देखिँदैन र तर यस मूर्तिसँग चाँगुस्थित छिन्नमस्ता मन्दिर भित्रको गणेशमूर्तिको तुलना आवश्यक छ। किनकि छिन्नमस्ता मन्दिर भित्रको गणेश मूर्ति भन्दा यस मूर्तिमा प्राचीनकालका कतिपय लक्षणहरू विद्यमान छन्। त्यसैले मध्यकालताका निर्मित गणेशका केही मूर्तिहरूको वसाईको स्थिति र शैलीगत प्रकृत्यालाई हेर्दा मणिचूडका गणेशमूर्तिको आदर्शमा चाँगुलगायत पछिल्ला कालका गणेशमूर्तिहरू बनेका देखिन्छन्।

यसै शिलशिलामा हालै मात्र आठौं शताब्दिको गणेशको सान्धैरै आकर्षक एउटा मूर्ति फेला परेको छ। नाला देखि पूर्व पट्टी फाँटको सानो मन्दिर भित्र शिवपरिवारको मूर्ति संगैको ढुङ्गामा नृत्यमुद्राका केही अन्य मूर्तिहरू पनि देखिएका छन्। यिनै शिवगणहरूमध्ये गणेश (चित्र नं ३) को यो प्रतिमा नृत्य मुद्रामा रहेको छ। प्राकृतिक हात्तीको टाउको भएको यस मूर्तिको शिरमा सामान्य प्रकारको शिरस्त्राण देखिन्छ। नाग- यज्ञोपवीतका साथै घोती र उत्तरीयको जुन प्रयोग यसमा देखिन्छ त्यो विलकुलै नौलो तथा चाखलाग्दो छ।

द्विभुज यस मूर्तिको बायाँ हातमा भएको मोदकपात्र माथि गणेशले आफ्नो सूँड राखेका छन्। त्यस्तै उनको दायाँ हातले प्रस्फुटित कमल फूलको गद्दा टिप्न लागेको देखिन्छ जसले गणेशका अधिकांश मूर्तिहरूका दायाँ हातले लिएको फलजस्तो वाटुलो वस्तुको प्रतिनिधित्व गरेको छ। त्यसैले गणेश मूर्तिका दायाँ हातमा रहेको फलजस्तो वस्तु नै वास्तवमा कमल फूलको गद्दा भएको कुरा देखिन आएको छ।

टिप्पणी

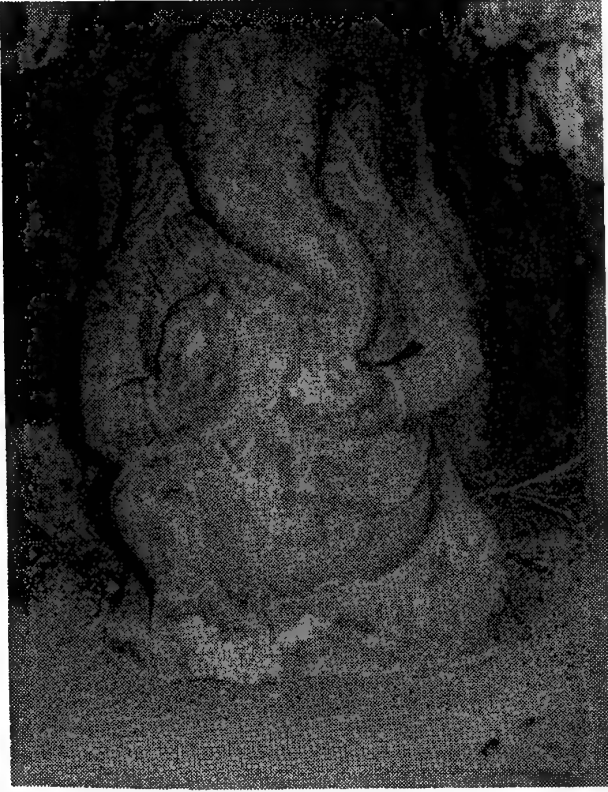
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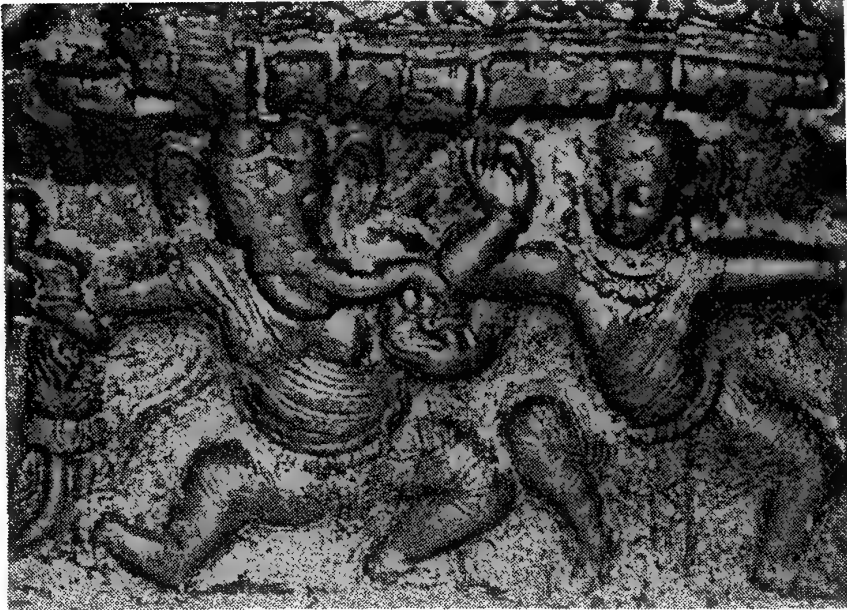
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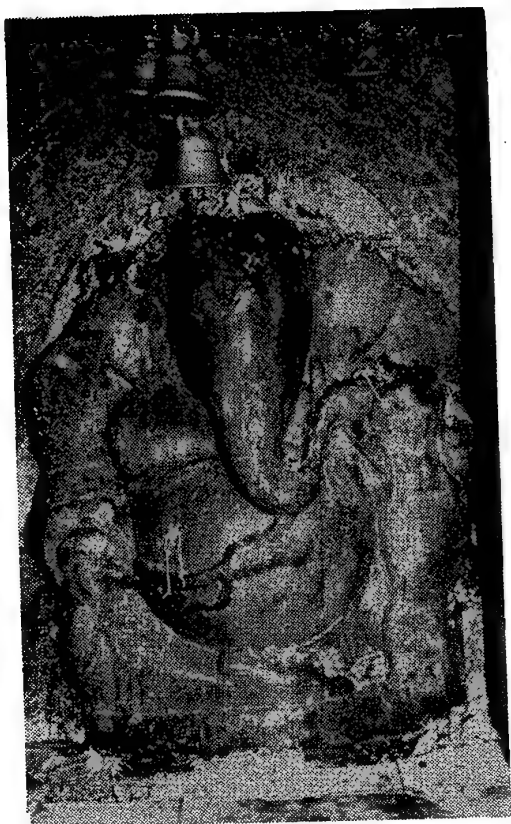
चित्र नं. १



चित्र नं. २



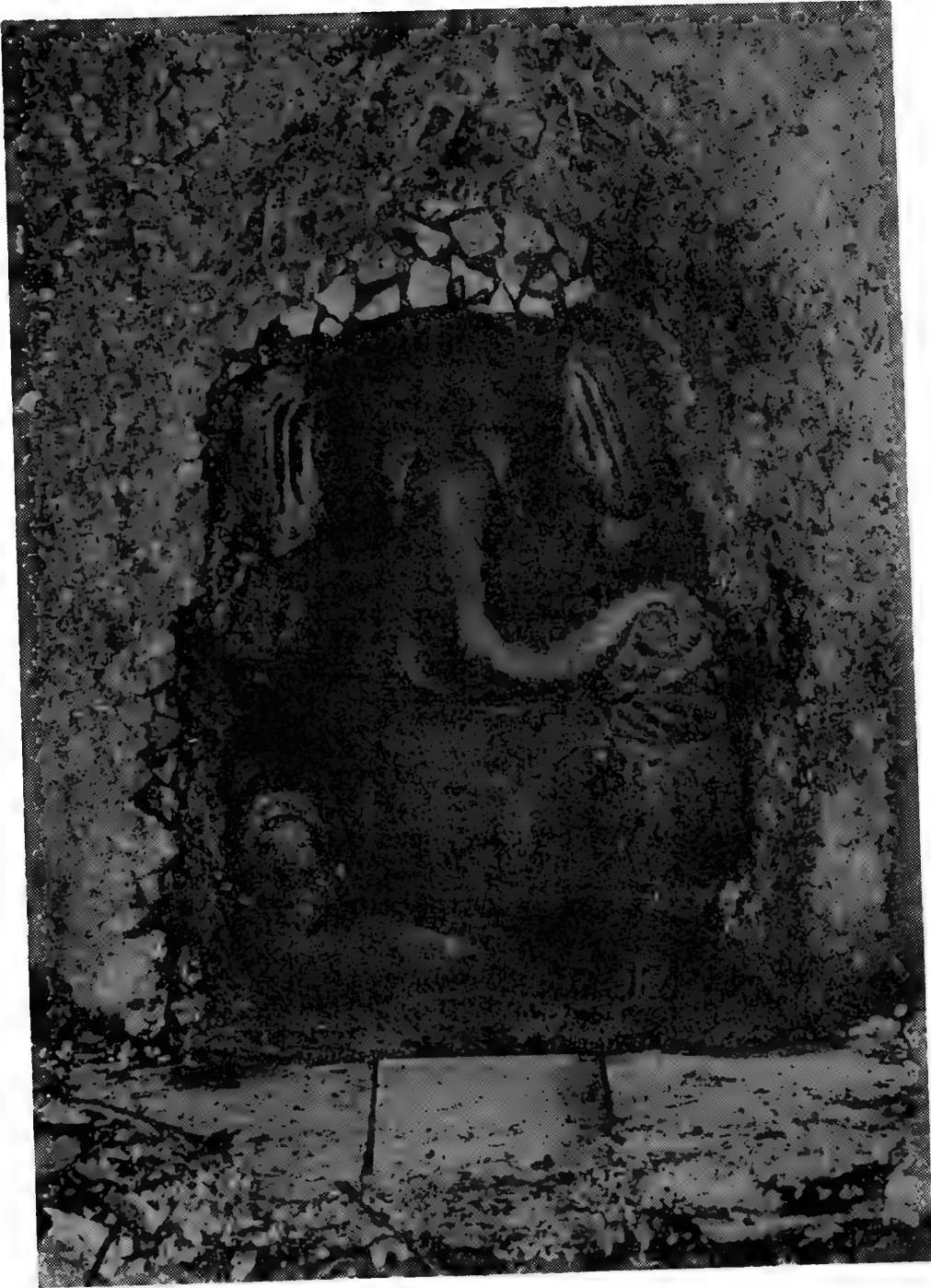
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चित्र नं. ४



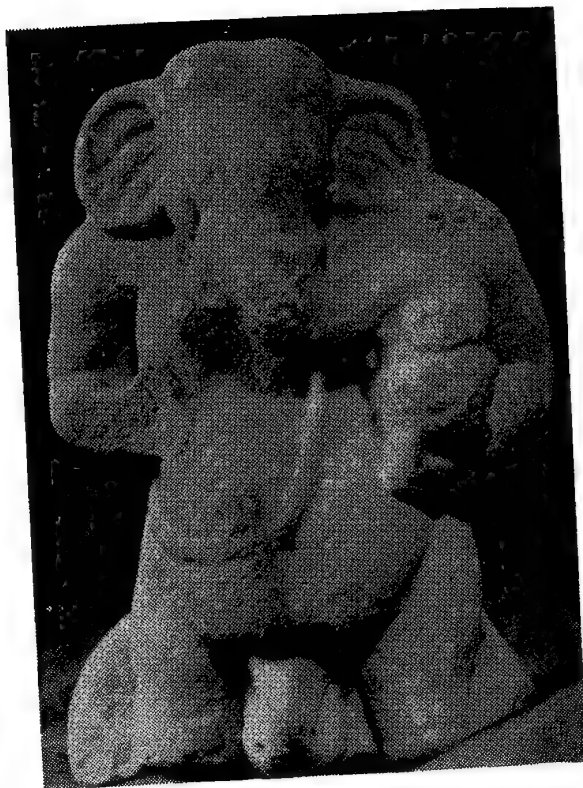
चित्र नं. ५



चित्र नं. ६



चित्र नं. ७



चित्र नं. ८



चित्र नं. ९

RESEARCH NOTE

नेपालको संविधान २०४७ र महिला उम्मेदवारी: एक सामाजिक तथा राजनैतिक अध्ययन

प्रभादेवी कैनी

ने.ए.अ. केन्द्र, किर्तिपुर

(यो लेख नेपाल तथा एशियाली अनुसन्धान केन्द्रद्वारा २०४८ सालमा गराएको एक लघु अनुसन्धानबाट प्राप्त तथ्य र तथ्याङ्कमा आधारित छ। सो कार्यका लागि काठमाडौं उपत्यका भित्रका तत्कालिन तीस जना महिला उम्मेदवारहरूको अन्तरवार्ता लिइएको थियो। यसका अतिरिक्त विभिन्न राजनैतिक दलहरूका शिर्षस्थ व्यक्तिहरूसँग भेटि उहाँहरूको मन्तव्य पनि बुझ्ने प्रयास गरिएको थियो।)

वर्तमान संविधानमा उल्लेखित प्रावधानहरू नेपाली महिलाहरूको राजनैतिक सहभागिताका लागि कतिको सहायक रहे र विभिन्न राजनैतिक दलका महिलाहरूले यस संविधानका प्रावधानहरूको के कसरी उपयोग गरे भन्ने बारे जानकारी प्राप्त गर्न यो अनुसन्धान कार्य गरिएको थियो।)

महिलाहरू पुरुषहरू भन्दा कम शिक्षित, सामाजिक रूपले शोषित र आर्थिक रूपले परावलम्बी हुनुका साथै राजनैतिक रूपले निष्कृय रहेको तथ्य धेरै अनुसन्धानहरूले देखाएका छन्। उनीहरूको यस स्थितिमा परिवर्तन ल्याई महिलाहरूलाई पनि राष्ट्रिय मूल प्रवाहमा समावेश गराउने प्रयास अनुरूप बहुदलिय व्यवस्थाको पुनर्स्थापना पश्चात् निर्मित नेपालको संविधान, २०४७ मा महिला अधिकारको उल्लेख धेरै ठाउँमा गरिएको छ।^१ यद्यपि २०३२ को नेपालको संविधानले पनि महिलालाई समान हकको मान्यता प्रदान नगरेको थिएन। सामान्य कानूनी प्रयोगमा वर्ग, लिङ्ग र धर्मको आधारमा भेदभाव नगरिने कुरा नेपालको संविधान, २०३२ मा पनि उल्लेखित छ। त्यसका साथै राजनैतिक अधिकारको उपभोगमा पनि महिला र पुरुष बीच कुनै भिन्नता उक्त संविधानमा उल्लेखित छैन।

स्थानिय होस् अथवा राष्ट्रिय राजनैतिक इकाईहरू जहाँ पनि महिलाको प्रतिनिधित्व पुरुषको तुलनामा नगण्य रहेको हुँदा उनीहरूको अवस्थामा सुधार ल्याउने प्रयास पञ्चायत कालमा पनि केही हद सम्ममा भएको थियो। अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय नारी वर्ष १९७५ ताका प्रत्येक नगर र गाउँ पञ्चायतमा कम्तिमा एक महिला सदस्य नियुक्त गरिनु पर्छ भनी त्यसका लागि कानूनी प्रकृयाको खोजी हुँदै थियो तर २०३२ को संविधानमा यी कुराहरू नपरेकाले पञ्चायतका कुनै पनि इकाईमा महिला समावेश गरिनु पर्ने कुनै बाध्यता रहेन। चुनावी प्रतिस्पर्धी मा उत्र्न पुरुष

सरह नसक्ने महिलाको स्थितिलाई विचार गरी राजनैतिक नियुक्तिद्वारा भए पनि उनीहरूको प्रतिनिधित्वमा वृद्धि गराई प्रोत्साहन दिने कार्य पञ्चायत कालमा पनि भएको पाइन्छ। २०४३ सालमा भएको निर्वाचनमा राष्ट्रिय पञ्चायतमा तीन जना महिला निर्वाचित भएका थिए भने ५ जना महिला महाराजाधिराजबाट नियुक्त गरीएका थिए जसबाट कूल १४० सदस्य रहने राष्ट्रिय पञ्चायतमा निर्वाचित र मनोनित भएका गरी जम्मा ८ जना महिलाको प्रतिनिधित्व (५.७%) भएको थियो।

सिद्धान्ततः समान अवसरको मान्यता हुँदा हुँदै पनि वास्तविक रूपमा महिला र पुरुषको बीचको अधिकार उपभोगको अन्तर घटाई महिलालाई राजनीतिमा पुरुष सरह सहभागी बनाउने उद्देश्यले वर्तमान संविधानको धारा ११४ मा महिला उम्मेदवारी सम्बन्धमा यसरी स्पष्ट उल्लेख गरिएको छ- 'प्रतिनिधि सभाको लागि हुने निर्वाचनमा प्रत्येक राजनैतिक संगठन वा दलका उम्मेदवारहरू मध्ये कम्तिमा पाँच प्रतिशत महिला उम्मेदवार हुनु अनिवार्य हुनेछ।'^२

संविधानले प्रदान गरेको यसै अधिकारको उपभोग गर्दै २०४८ साल बैशाख २९ गते सम्पन्न महा निर्वाचनमा विभिन्न राजनैतिक दलहरूबाट खडा गराएका र स्वतन्त्र रूपमा उम्मेदवार दिनेहरू गरी अधिराज्यभरबाट कुल १३४५ उम्मेदवार खडा भएका थिए। जसमध्ये ८० जना महिला उम्मेदवार थिए। कुल महिला उम्मेदवार मध्ये ७२ जना विभिन्न राजनैतिक दलबाट प्रतिनिधित्व गराइएका थिए भने स्वतन्त्र रूपमा उम्मेदवारी दिने ८ जना महिलाहरू थिए। (अनुसूची नं. १) कुल सदस्य संख्या २०५ रहेको वर्तमान संसदमा जम्मा ७ जना महिला निर्वाचित भएका छन्।^३ यसरी अहिलेको संसदमा ३.४ प्रतिशत महिला प्रतिनिधित्व भएको छ। महिलाहरूको विद्यमान अवस्थालाई ध्यानमा राख्दै उनीहरूलाई राजनैतिक रूपमा सकृय गराउने उद्देश्य अनुरूप प्रत्येक दलले आ-आफ्नो कुल उम्मेदवारीको न्यूनतम पाँच प्रतिशत महिला उम्मेदवार बनाउनु पर्ने प्रावधान राखिएको थियो तथापि महिलाहरूको लागि आरक्षित सीटभन्दा पनि १.६ प्रतिशत कम महिलाहरू संसदमा प्रतिनिधित्व गर्न सफल भएका छन्। यस अध्ययनमा समावेश गरिएका उपत्यकाका तीन जिल्लाहरू (काठमाडौं, ललितपुर र भक्तपुर) बाट जम्मा ३० जना उम्मेदवारहरू मध्येबाट केवल एक जनालाई मात्र सफलता मिलेको छ। (अनुसूचि नं. २)

वर्तमान संविधानमा उल्लेखित प्रावधान नेपाली महिलाहरूको राजनैतिक सहभागिताका लागि कत्तिको सहायक रह्यो र विभिन्न राजनैतिक दलका महिलाहरूले यस संविधानका ती प्रावधानहरूको के कसरी उपभोग गरे भन्ने बारे जानकारी प्राप्त गर्न यो अनुसन्धान कार्य गरिएको थियो। राजनैतिक अधिकार संगसंगै नेपाली नारीहरूको सामाजिक, आर्थिक र सांस्कृतिक परिवेशले उनीहरूलाई आफ्ना राजनैतिक अधिकारको उपयोग गर्ने क्षमतालाई के कत्तिको प्रभावित गरेको छ भन्ने कुराको विश्लेषण गर्ने प्रयास पनि गरिएको थियो।

महिलाहरूको शैक्षिक तथा राजनैतिक स्थितिको विश्लेषण

२०१५ सालको निर्वाचनमा ९ वटा राजनैतिक पार्टीहरू प्रतिस्पर्धामा रहेका थिए। त्यसमा केवल एक राजनैतिक दल (नेपाली कांग्रेस)ले मात्र एक जना महिलालाई उम्मेदवार बनाएको थियो। बत्तीस वर्षको अन्तरालपछि देशमा पुनः राजनैतिक दलहरू संगठित हुने अधिकार प्राप्त गरेका थिए। बैशाख २९, २०४८ को निर्वाचनमा भाग लिनका लागि निर्वाचन आयोगमा निवेदन दिएका ४७ पार्टीहरू मध्ये ४४ वटालाई निर्वाचन आयोगद्वारा राजनैतिक दलको मान्यता प्रदान गरिएको थियो। कूल ४४ दलहरूले राजनैतिक दलका रूपमा मान्यता प्राप्त गरेका भए पनि महानिर्वाचनमा विभिन्न २० राजनैतिक दलद्वारा उम्मेदवारी दाखिला गरिएको थियो (अनुसूची नं. १) उम्मेदवारी दाखिला गर्ने मध्ये केवल १५ राजनैतिक दलहरूले ७२ जना महिला उम्मेदवार उठाएका थिए। (अनुसूचि ३) कूल जनसंख्याको आधा भाग ओगटेको महिला संख्यालाई हेर्दा त यो उम्मेदवार संख्यालाई धेरै भन्न मिल्दैन। तै पनि सैयौं वर्ष देखि सामाजिक र आर्थिक दृष्टिले बढि शोषित र शैक्षिक दृष्टिले पछि परेको महिलाहरूको स्थितिलाई नियाल्दा यो संख्यालाई कम हो भन्न सकिने ठाउँ छैन।

उपत्यकाका १० क्षेत्रहरूबाट खडा भएका कूल ९५ उम्मेदवार मध्ये ३० जना महिला उम्मेदवारहरू थिए। (अनुसूची नं. २) यस निर्वाचनमा खडा हुने अधिराज्य भरिका उम्मेदवारहरू मध्ये पुरुषको अनुपातमा महिलाहरूको प्रतिशत केवल ५.९५ थियो भने उपत्यकामा यो अनुपात बढेर ३१.५८% भएको पाइयो।

तालिका नं. १**उपत्यकामा पुरुष तथा महिला उम्मेदवारहरूको अनुपात**

जिल्ला	पुरुष	महिला	जम्मा	प्रतिशत
ललितपुर	१९	७	२६	२६.९
भक्तपुर	७	४	११	२६.३
काठमाडौं	३८	१९	५८	३२.७
नेपाल	१२६५	८०	१३४५	५.९५

श्रोत: फिल्डवर्क, २०४८

अधिराज्य भरका महिला उम्मेदवार मध्ये ३७.५०% को उपत्यकाबाट मात्र थिए। देशको हरेक प्रकारका भौतिक सरसुविधा अन्यत्र भन्दा बढि मात्रामा उपलब्ध काठमाडौं उपत्यकामा यस्तो हुनु स्वाभाविकै थियो। अधिराज्यका अन्य जिल्लाहरू भन्दा ज्यादा शिक्षित र राजनैतिक हिसावले पनि सचेत महिलाहरू संख्या यहाँ बढि भएकोले पनि महिला उम्मेदवारहरू अन्यत्र भन्दा बढि हुनु स्वाभाविकै देखिन्छ।

निर्वाचनमा उम्मेदवारी बन्ने मात्र अन्तिम लक्ष नभई आफू पेशेवार राजनीतिज्ञ भएको कुरामा चार जना महिला उम्मेदवारले दावी गरेका थिए। पञ्चायत कालमा काठमाडौं नगर पञ्चायतको उप-प्रधानपञ्च बनेकी कञ्चनमाला चालिसे र सोही कालमा राष्ट्रिय पञ्चायतको सदस्य बनेकी नानीमैयाँ दाहाल तथा पञ्चायत काल र त्यसको स्थापना पूर्व पनि आफू राजनीतिमा संलग्न रहेका मंगला देवी सिंह र सहाना प्रधानको उम्मेदवारी साधारणतया राजनीतिक अपेक्षा अनुरूप मान्नु पर्दछ। तर अधिकांश उम्मेदवारहरू जसलाई न ता पञ्चायत र पार्टीगत राजनीतिको भिन्नता थाहा थियो र न कहिल्यै कुनै राजनैतिक घटनाले प्रभावित पारेको थियो, त्यस प्रकारका अनभिज्ञ महिलाहरूले पनि उम्मेदवारी दिएका थिए। अधिकांश महिला उम्मेदवारहरू मध्ये कृषक थिए भने जागिर खानेहरूमध्ये शिक्षिकाहरूले मनोनयन पत्र दाखिला गरेका थिए। आफ्नो पेशा जे जस्तो बताए पनि बिहान बेलुकी महिलाको परम्परागत दायित्व (गृहकार्य)मा व्यस्त रहने कुरा सबैले स्विकारेका थिए भने अरू कुनै पेशामा संलग्न नभई केवल गृहणी रहेका महिलाको संख्या पनि कम थिएन।

तालिक नं. २
उम्मेदवार महिलाको पेशा

पेशा/व्यवसाय	संख्या
कृषि	७
जागिर	५
गृहकार्य	६
समाजसेवा/राजनीति	५
व्यवसाय/व्यापार	५
अध्ययन	२
जम्मा	२०

श्रोत: फिल्डवर्क, २०४८

प्रत्येक १८ वर्ष पुगेको नागरिकले निर्वाचनमा, आफ्नो मताधिकारको प्रयोग गर्न पाउने तथा उम्मेदवार हुने व्यक्ति २५ वर्ष पुगेको हुनु पर्ने प्रावधान नेपालको संविधान, २०४७ मा रहेको छ। यस अनुरूप उम्मेदवार बनेका महिलाहरू मध्ये सबैभन्दा कम उमेरकी उम्मेदवार सद्भावना पार्टीकी नमिता सिंह र ने.क.पा. (वर्मा समूह) की गौरी कार्कीको उमेर २६ वर्ष र सबैभन्दा अधिक उमेरकी ने.का.की मंगला देवी सिंहको (६३ वर्ष) थियो। कुल उम्मेदवारको आधा भन्दा बढि महिला २६-३५ उमेर समूहको बीचमा रहेको पाइएको थियो। एस.एल.सी. देखि एम.ए.

सम्मको अध्ययन गर्ने महिलाहरू १५ जना मध्ये ९ जना यस उमेर समूह (२६-३५) भित्र पर्दछन्। कुल उम्मेदवारको ८० प्रतिशत महिला २६-४५ उमेर समूह भित्रका महिलाहरू हुन् र यिनै समूह भित्र अधिकांश शिक्षित महिलाहरू पर्नुले शिक्षा आर्जन र राजनैतिक संलग्नता बीचको सकारात्मक सम्बन्ध प्रस्तुत गर्दछ। साथै जागिर खाने पाँच जना महिला पनि यही २६-३५ उमेर समूहका महिलाहरू हुन्।

तालिका नं. ३
उम्मेदवारको उमेरगत समूह

उमेरगत समूह	संख्या	प्रतिशत
२६-३५	१६	५६.३
३६-४५	८	२६.७
४६-५५	३	१०.०
५६-६३	३	१०.०
जम्मा	३०	१००.००

श्रोत: निर्वाचन आयोग, २०४८

तालिका नं. ४
उमेरगत समूह अनुसार शैक्षिक स्तर

उमेरगत समूह	एस. एल. सी. वा सो भन्दा माथि अध्ययन गर्ने संख्या	प्रतिशत
२६-३५	९	६०.०
३६-४५	५	३३.३
४६-५५	-	००.०
५६-६३	१	६.६६
जम्मा	१५	१००.००

श्रोत: फिल्डवर्क, २०४८

केन्द्रिय तथ्यांक विभागको १९८७ को जनसंख्या सर्वेक्षण अनुसार सन् १९८१ देखि १९८६ सम्म ग्रामीण साक्षरता २१ प्रतिशतबाट बढेर ३३ प्रतिशत पुगेको थियो। त्यसबेला शहरी क्षेत्रको ५० प्रतिशतबाट बढेर ६३ प्रतिशत पुगेको थियो। यसै अवधिमा पुरुषको साक्षरता ३४ प्रतिशतबाट बढेर ५२ प्रतिशतमा पुग्यो भने महिलाको शैक्षिक वृद्धि केवल १२ बाट १८ प्रतिशतमा पुगेको थियो। पुरुष र महिला तथा ग्रामीण र शहरी क्षेत्रको यो तुलनाबाट ग्रामीण महिलाहरू पुरुषहरू र शहरी क्षेत्रका महिला भन्दा ज्यादा अवसरहरूबाट बञ्चित रहेको देखियो। यस्तो अवस्थामा

अन्यत्र भन्दा उपत्यकाका जिल्लाहरूमा महिला उम्मेदवार संख्या अधिक रहनु स्वभाविकै हो। यो स्वभाविक परिस्थितिका साथसाथै राजनैतिक पार्टीहरूले धेरै महिला उपत्यकामा मात्र उठाएका छन्। (अनुसूची नं. २) नौ जना महिला उम्मेदवार उठाएको नेकपा प्रजातन्त्रवादीले आफ्नो उम्मेदवारीको ५५.५६% (५ जना) त उपत्यकामा मात्रै उठाएको छ। नेपाल सद्भावना पार्टीले आफ्ना महिला उम्मेदवारहरूको ८०.००% उपत्यकाबाट उठाएको छ, त्यसैगरी रा.प्र.पा., वर्मा समूह संयुक्त जनमोर्चा नेपालले ५०% र नेपाल राष्ट्रिय जनमुक्ति मोर्चाले ६६.६७% उपत्यकामा मात्र उठाउनाले महिला उम्मेदवारीको अनुपात यहाँ ज्यादा हुन गएको छ। महिला उम्मेदवार अधिराज्यभर समानुपातमा हुनु पर्छ भन्ने धारणा अनुरूप केवल नेपाली कांग्रेस र ने.क.पा. एमालेले गर्न खोजेको देखिएको छ।

अधिकांश रूपमा भरस्वरै मात्र अस्तित्वमा आएका राजनैतिक दलहरू जसको स्थापना र संगठन प्रकृत्यामा प्रायः पुरुषको मात्रै हात छ भन्दा अन्यथा नपर्ला, त्यस्ता संगठनहरू भित्र महिलालाई समावेश गर्ने वा नगर्ने, कस-कसलाई समावेश गर्ने आदि कुराहरू प्रायः पुरुषहरूद्वारा नै निर्धारित हुन्छन् भन्नु पनि अत्युक्ति नहोला।

देशको चौतर्फी तथा परिपक्व विकासको लागि नारीको पूर्ण सहभागिताको आवश्यकता अपरिहार्य रहेको कुरा प्रायः सबै राजनैतिक दलहरूले आफ्ना घोषणापत्रहरूमा स्विकारेका छन्। तैपनि अहिले सम्म महिलालाई आफ्नै आन्तरिक संगठन भित्र पनि उचित स्थान र मर्यादा नदिएको कुरा उनीहरूको केन्द्रिय समितिको संरचनाले स्पष्ट देखाउँछ।

तालिका नं. ५

राजनैतिक दलहरूको केन्द्रिय समितिको संरचना

राजनैतिक दल	पदाधिकारी तथा सदस्य संख्या	महिला संख्या
१) नेपाली कांग्रेस	२५	-
२) ने.क.पा. (एमाले)	२८	१
३) रा.प्र.पा. (थापा)	१४२	५
४) रा.प्र.पा. (चन्द)	२८	१
५) ने.क.पा. (प्रजातन्त्रवादी)	२१	-
६) नेपाल सद्भावना पार्टी	३७	-
७) नेपाल राष्ट्रिय जनमुक्ति मोर्चा	२०	-
८) नेपाल मजदुर किसान पार्टी	२१	१०
९) ने.क.पा. (वर्मा)	१९	-
१०) संयुक्त जनमोर्चा	१६	-

दशवटा पार्टीको केन्द्रिय समितिको संरचनामा केवल चारवटा पार्टीले मात्र महिलालाई आफ्नो केन्द्रिय समितिमा समावेश गराएका छन्। दुइवटा कम्युनिष्ट पार्टीहरू र दुइवटा पञ्चायतपार्टी द्वारा केन्द्रिय समितिमा महिलालाई समावेश गराइएको छ भने सबैभन्दा पुरानो र देशको सशक्त पार्टीको रूपमा चिनिने पार्टी नेपाली कांग्रेस- जुन पार्टीले २०५ स्थानको संसदमा ११० स्थान जितेको छ र पार्टीले उठाएका महिला उम्मेदवारको ४५.४५% लाई जिताएको पनि छ त्यस पार्टीको केन्द्रिय समितिमा एउटा मात्र महिला पनि समावेश गरिएको छैन। यसबाट राजनैतिक दलहरूमा नारीको उचित प्रतिनिधित्वको व्यवस्था गरिनु पर्छ” भनि आफ्नो घोषणा पत्रमा बचनबद्ध नेपाली कांग्रेसले एकजना महिला पनि केन्द्रिय समितिमा समावेश नगराएर पार्टीले आफ्नो भनाइ र गराईको फराकिलो अन्तर प्रस्तुत गरेको छ।

जुन-जुन राजनैतिक पार्टीहरूको केन्द्रिय समितिमा महिला समावेश गराइएका छन् ती पार्टीहरूले आफ्नो केन्द्रिय समितिमा समावेश गराइएका महिलालाई नै उम्मेदवार बनाएका छन्। ने.क.पा. एमाले कि सहाना प्रधान नेपाल मजदुर किसान पार्टीकी गिता लासीव तथा राष्ट्रिय प्रजातन्त्र पार्टी (चन्द) की चन्दा शाहा र राष्ट्रिय प्रजातन्त्र पार्टी (थापा)की सुश्री विष्णु कुमारी। उपत्यकाका तीस जना महिला उम्मेदवार मध्ये साहना प्रधान र गिता लासिव बाहेक कोही पनि आफ्नो पार्टीको केन्द्रिय, जिल्लास्तरीय तथा गाउँस्तरीय पनि जिम्मेदार पद ग्रहण गरेका महिलाहरू नभएको हुँदा विभिन्न राजनैतिक दलहरूले महिलाहरूलाई अनुरोध गरेर तत्काल आफ्नो पार्टीका सदस्यता प्रदान गर्नुका साथै उम्मेदवारी दिनु परेको थियो। राजनैतिक दलका महिला उम्मेदवारहरूको सम्बन्धित दल भित्र उनीहरूलाई दिइएको स्थानलाई विचार गर्दा पनि यो तथ्यको लागि अझ पुष्टि मिल्दछ।

उम्मेदवारको चयन

निर्वाचनमा सफलता प्राप्त गर्नको लागि संगठनात्मक आधार मजबुत हुनु जति अपरिहार्य मानिन्छ उम्मेदवारको व्यक्तिगत तथा राजनैतिक कृयाकलाप पनि त्यतिकै आवश्यक हुन्छ भन्ने कुरा पनि शायद कसैले नकाढेन। भरखर खुलेका तथा पुराना पार्टीहरूको लागि एक असजिलो स्थिति के देखा परेको देखियो भने एकातिर आफ्नो पार्टीको अस्थित्वको लागि महिला उम्मेदवार उठाउनु पर्ने अर्कोतिर महिला कार्यकर्ता आफ्नो पार्टीमा नभएको हुँदा खोज्नु पर्ने र अनुरोध गरेर आफ्नो पार्टीको सदस्यता प्रदान गर्नुपर्ने तथा उम्मेदवार बनि दिनका लागि सवीनय अनुरोध गर्नु परेको थियो। यस्तो अवस्था आउनुको मुख्य कारण संविधानमा एकासी राखिएको महिला, उम्मेदवार सम्बन्धी प्रावधानले मात्र महिलालाई स्थान दिनु परेको थियो। त्यस अघि उनीहरूको उत्थानको खोजी लेखाई भन्दा गराईमा कुनै पनि पार्टीले नगरेको देखिन्छ। त्यसैले आफू उम्मेदवार वन्न पाउनु पर्छ भनेर कुनै पनि

महिलाले दावी गरेका थिएनन्। स्वतन्त्र उम्मेदवार वाहेक साहना प्रधान र मंगला देवी सिंहलाई पार्टीले सहजता साथ प्रस्तुत गरेका थिए भने अरू उम्मेदवारको लागि विभिन्न सूत्र लगाएर खोज्नु परेको कुरा प्रत्यक्ष/अप्रत्यक्ष अन्तर्वाताबाट थाहा लागेको थियो। त्यसैले सम्बन्धित पार्टीका कार्यकर्ताहरूले या त आफ्नो नातेदारले दवाव दिनु परेको थियो या त कुनै न कुनै प्रलोभनमा पारेर महिलालाई आफ्नो पार्टीको उम्मेदवार बनाउनु परेको यथार्थता पनि महिलाहरूलाई “उम्मेदवारी कसरी प्राप्त गर्नु भयो?” भन्ने प्रश्नको उत्तरमा थाहा लागेको थियो। राजनीतिमा आफ्नो चाख नभएको कारणले गर्दा धेरै महिलाले उम्मेदवार हुन इन्कार गरेका पनि थिए। तर कसैलाई पार्टीका जिम्मेवार व्यक्तिहरूको अनुरोध, कसैलाई आफ्ना नेताहरूको दवाव टाल्न गाह्रो भएको थियो। त्यसका साथै कसैलाई आर्थिक प्रलोभनमा पनि पारिएको कुरा उनीहरूसँग गरिएको प्रत्यक्ष तथा परोक्ष छलफलबाट थाहा लागेको थियो। राजनैतिक प्रतिवद्धताको खोजी नभई आफ्ना नातेदार, दिदी बहिनी, श्रीमती, सालीलाई उम्मेदवारका लागि प्रयोग गरेबाट यो कुराको तथ्य मिल्दछ। कूल उम्मेदवारहरूमा ४०% भन्दा ज्यादा संबन्धित पार्टीका पदासिन तथा चर्चित व्यक्तित्व नातेदार महिला भएकोले पनि यो ज्यादा तर्कयुक्त देखिन्छ। (अनुसूचि नं. ४)

त्यसका साथै महिला उम्मेदवारहरूलाई “हार्ने निश्चित हुँदा हुँदै पनि तपाईं किन उठ्नु भयो त?” भन्ने प्रश्नको जवाफमा कविता शाह भन्छिन् - “सम्झीले अनुरोध गर्नु भयो”, उमा थापा भन्छिन्- म त उठ्दिन भनेको भिनाजुले मान्छे नै पाइएन तिमी उठी दिनु पर्थ्यो भन्नु भयो” भन्ने जवाफ दिएका थिए।

राजनैतिक हैसियत राख्ने एक जना उम्मेदवारको विजय (साहना प्रधान) र राजनीतिमा हारजीत स्विकार्दा पनि त्यति लज्जाजनक हार नभई उप-विजेता बनेकी एक जना उम्मेदवार मंगला देवी सिंह वाहेक अरू सबै उम्मेदवारहरूले प्राप्त गरेको मत संख्या हेर्दा (अनुसूचि नं १) अधिकांश महिलाहरूको राजनैतिक हैसियत साह्रै दयनीय प्रतीत हुन्छ।

निर्वाचन क्षेत्रको चयन

प्रत्येक राजनैतिक दलले उम्मेदवारहरूको चयन गर्दा सम्बन्धित क्षेत्रमा उम्मेदवारको प्रभावकारीता, उसले प्राप्त गर्न सक्ने मतसंख्या, आफ्नो तथा अन्य दलका उम्मेदवारको स्थितिको लेखाजोखा गर्ने गर्दछन्। कथंकदाचित एक क्षेत्रमा आफ्नो उम्मेदवारको नाजुक स्थिति देखियो भने उसलाई अन्यत्र जहाँ लैजाँदा बढि प्रभावकारी देखिन्छ त्यहाँ सार्ने पनि गर्दछन्। तर एकातिर महिला उम्मेदवारलाई जस्तै प्रबल प्रतिपक्षीसँग पनि भिडाइएको छ भने अर्कोतिर आफुलाई कुन क्षेत्रको उम्मेदवार बनाइएको छ, आफु उठ्ने ठाउँमा अरू पार्टीका के कस्ता उम्मेदवार छन् आदि कुरा १० जना महिलालाई थाहा थिएन। फेरी आफ्नो इच्छा भन्दा अरुद्वारा

संचालित भएका महिला उम्मेदवारले आफ्नो लागि अनुकूल क्षेत्र रोज्ने त कुनै आधार नै देखिंदैन त्यसैले पार्टीले तोकिएको ठाउँमा जानु बाहेक अरु कुनै विकल्प थिएन। हुन त उनीहरूलाई जहाँ पठाउँदा पनि विशेष फरक नपर्ने देखिन्छ, तैपनि अधिकांश पार्टीका जिम्मेदार व्यक्तिहरूले महिलालाई प्रबल प्रतिपक्षीसंग भिडाईएको कुरा क्षेत्र वितरणमा स्पष्ट देख्न सकिन्छ। उदाहरणको लागि ने.का. सभापति कृष्ण प्रसाद भट्टराई र ने.क.पा. एमालेका महासचिव मदन भण्डारी लड्ने क्षेत्र नं. १ काठमाडौंमा ने.क.पा. वर्मा समूहको कमला कोइराला तथा जनमुक्ति मोर्चाकी शोभा पौड्याललाई उम्मेदवारी दिइएको थियो। प्रतिपक्षीसंग लड्ने र जित्ने आशा नराखेकी शोभा पौड्याललाई तपाईं किन यो क्षेत्रबाट उठ्नु हुनुभयो? भन्ने हाम्रो प्रश्नको जवाफमा हाँसेर-लड्नु लड्नु ठूलैसंग लड्नु पर्छ, हार्नु छ नै भने सानासँग लडेर किन हार्ने भनी आफ्नो उम्मेदवारीलाई एक सशक्त मुकाविला भन्दा आफैले उपहासको रूपमा स्विकारेको प्रतीत हुन्थ्यो। त्यस्तै काठमाडौं क्षेत्र नं. ४ की प्रबल उम्मेदवार सहाना प्रधानसंग भिड्नलाई ने.क.पा. वर्माले निर्मला घिमिरे र ने.म.कि.पा.ले गिता लसिवलाई उठाउनु अर्को त्यस्तै कौतुहलपूर्ण कुरा देखिन्छ। यी दुई प्रतिपक्षीको व्यक्तिगत तथा राजनैतिक क्रियाकलाप र उपलब्धि तुलना योग्य देखिंदैन। यसैले होला “तपाईं को संग ज्यादा मुकाविला गर्नु परेको छ” भन्ने हाम्रो उत्तरमा सहाना प्रधानले मैले कसैसँग प्रतिस्पर्धा नै गर्नु परेको छैन भनी चुनावी प्रतिस्पर्धालाई हल्कासंग लिई स्पष्ट कडा उत्तर दिनु भएको थियो।

यसरी एक सशक्त उम्मेदवारसंग मुकाविला गर्ने भनी संभावनासम्म पनि नराखेका महिलाहरू चुनावी प्रतिस्पर्धामा उत्र्दैमा राजनैतिक उपलब्धि केही देखिंदैन तापनि कल्याणी शाहको विचार यस प्रकार को छ-

“यस चुनावमा महिला उठाउनु मात्र पनि एउटा उपलब्धि हो र उनीहरूको जमानत फिर्ता मात्र गराउन सकियो भने पनि केही मात्रामा राजनैतिक उपलब्धि भएकै ठान्दछु।”

संवैधानिक प्रावधान र महिला शोषणको नयाँ रूप

संविधान निर्माणकर्ताहरूले प्रत्येक दलद्वारा आफ्नो कुल उम्मेदवारीको पाँच प्रतिशत महिलालाई दिनु पर्ने प्रावधान राखि दिए। यसबाट सबै पार्टीलाई महिला प्रस्तुत गर्नु पर्ने बाध्यताको सृजना त भयो तर महिलालाई जिताउनुपर्ने अन्यथा राष्ट्रिय पार्टीको मान्यता प्राप्त नगरी नै कुनै प्रावधान नभएबाट महिलालाई उठाउनु महिला वर्गका हितमा नभएर पार्टी विशेषले निर्वाह गर्नु पर्ने विशेष शर्त मात्र सावित भएको छ। उपत्यकाका ३० जना उम्मेदवार मध्ये केवल एक जना साहना प्रधानलाई मात्र सफलता मिलेको थियो। हिसावमा देखाउँदा उपत्यकाको एक जनाको सफलता पनि ३.३% पर्न आउँछ। तर यहाँ हिसाव मात्रले कुरा स्पष्ट हुँदैन। अथवा हिसाबलाई मात्र आधार बनाउन युक्तिसंगत देखिंदैन। उपत्यकाका ३० उम्मेदवार मध्ये केवल

साहाना प्रधानलाई मात्र संसदमा प्रतिनिधित्व गर्ने अवसर प्राप्त भयो। संवैधानिक प्रावधानले साहना प्रधान (जो देश भरका उम्मेदवारहरूमा अत्याधिक मतले विजयी हुने उम्मेदवार हुन्) संविधानमा ५% को व्यवस्था नभएको भए के उनी उम्मेदवारको रूपमा खडा हुने थिइनन्? के उनको उम्मेदवारीको चयनमा तथा सफलतामा यस प्रावधानले केही वल पुऱ्याएको छ? संवैधानिक प्रावधानले उनको उम्मेदवारीलाई सजिलो गराएको पुष्टि गर्ने कुनै तथ्य भेटिंदैन। यही तथ्य अर्को तिरबाट हेर्दा अरू २९ जनालाई यस संवैधानिक प्रावधानले के फाइदा गरेको छ? निर्वाचनमा सफलता प्राप्त गर्न नसकेका २९ जना महिला मध्ये २८ जनाको जमानत जफत भएको छ। संवैधानिक प्रावधान अनुसार उम्मेदवार वन्नु मात्र उनीहरूको उद्देश्य हो? (अनुसूची नं. १)

महिलाहरू जो राजनीतिमा कति पनि चाख राख्दैनन् र विधायिका के हो, त्यहाँ गएर आफुले गर्ने के हो भन्ने कति पनि थाहा नभएका महिलाहरू पनि उम्मेदवार बनाइएका हुँदा पुरुष कै इच्छा र आवश्यकता अनुकूल उनीहरू चलनु पर्ने बाध्यताको सृजना भएको देखिन्छ।

संवैधानिक मान्यता पुऱ्याउन राजनैतिक पार्टीहरूले नयाँ नयाँ महिला आफ्नो पार्टीमा लिँदा जित्ने संभावना भएक महिला पाउने त कुरै भएन, जसलाई भेटिन्छ त्यसलाई ल्याउने, नभेटिए अनुरोध गरेर कसैलाई बोलाउने, त्यति गर्दा पनि नभए दवाव पनि दिनु पर्ने अवस्थाको सृजना भएको थियो। त्यहाँ राजनैतिक सुझबुझ भए नभएको, पढे नपढेको विशेष योगदान पार्टीलाई र महिलाको उन्नतीका लागि विशेष योगदान दिएका व्यक्तिहरू रोज्ने अवस्था नै थिएन। त्यसैले राजनैतिक प्रतिवद्धताको खोजी होइन आफ्ना नातेदार, दिदी बहिनी, श्रीमती, साली, आदिलाई अगाडि सार्नु परेको थियो। कूल उम्मेदवारहरूमा ४३.३% सम्बन्धित पार्टीका चर्चित व्यक्तिका नातेदार महिला भएबाट यस तथ्यका अरू पुष्टि मिल्दछ। (अनुसूची नं. ३)

उम्मेदवारको चयन क्रय-विक्रय

राजनीतिसँग सरोकार नराख्ने महिलाहरूले आफु उम्मेदवार बन्न इन्कार गरेपछि उनीहरूलाई जसरी पनि फकाउनु पर्ने बाध्यता पुरुषहरूलाई परेको थियो। आफ्नो पार्टीको अस्थित्व नै लोप हुने अवस्थाको सृजना हुनेदेखि पुरुषहरूले महिला उम्मेदवार खडा गर्न आर्थिक प्रलोभन पनि देखाएका थिए। उम्मेदवारको क्रय विक्रयको यस सिलसिलामा के कति लिने दिने भयो भन्ने कुरा उम्मेदवारहरूले बताउन नचाहेको हुँदा यति नै भनी किटान साथ भन्न नसकिए पनि उनीहरू प्रलोभनमा परेको कुरा परोक्ष प्रश्नको उत्तरबाट थाहा लागेको थियो। अरूबाट पैसा लिएर चुनावमा लड्नु पर्दा पैसा पाएकोमा खुशी हुनु भन्दा महिला वर्गको कमजोरीको फाइदा उठाइएको अनुभव केही महिलाले गरेका थिए। यसै सन्दर्भमा कविता शाह

भन्थीन् “यो दुर्भाग्य हाम्रै कमजोरीबाट भएको हो, हामी सक्षम छैनौं, त्यसैले पुरुषले जे भन्यो त्यही मान्ने पर्छ।”

चुनावको क्रममा उम्मेदवार बीच हुने तालमेल (कसैलाई पैसा दिएर उम्मेदवारी फिर्ता दिलाउनु पर्ने, कसैलाई मौन बस्न लगाउनु पर्ने) जस्ता क्रियाकलापहरूमा पार्टीले गर्नु पर्ने खर्च पुरुष पुरुषको बीच भन्दा पुरुष महिलाको बीच ज्यादै न्यून रहने महसूस गरिन्छ। यस कथनको प्रमाण स्वरूप हामी के लिन सक्छौं भने आफू नजित्ने थाहा हुँदा हुँदै पनि किन उठ्नु भयो भन्ने हाम्रो प्रश्नको उत्तरमा कसै-कसैले अनुरोध गरेको तथा धरौटी वापत ३०००१/-/४०००१/- रूपैयाँ सम्बन्धित व्यक्तिहरूले दिएको बताएका थिए। यो क्रय विक्रय ज्यादै न्यून मूल्यको थियो भन्ने कुराको पुष्टि अन्य एक कुराले पनि गर्दछ। अधिकांश पार्टीहरूमा एक दुइ जना चर्चित महिलाले उम्मेदवारी दिएका छैनन्। उम्मेदवारी चयन गर्दाको क्रममा साधारणतया निर्वाचन पूर्व जनताहरूको ने. क. पा. (प्रजातन्त्रवादी)संग सम्बन्धित कल्याणी शाह, संयुक्त जनमोर्चा संग सम्बन्धित हिसिला यमी, रा. प्र.पा. थापाकी कमल राणा, रा. प्र. पा. थापाकी प्रतिभा राणा, ने. का.की मंगला देवी, ने. क. पा. एमालेकी साहना प्रधानलाई उठाइन्छ भन्ने साधारण अपेक्षा थियो तर दुइ जना वाहेक अरूहरूले उम्मेदवारी नदिएका र कहिल्यै नाउँ सुन्नमा नआएका महिलाहरूको उम्मेदवारीले कौतुहलता जगाएको थियो। के कारणले यस्तो भयो त भन्दा शिक्षाको स्तर उच्च भएका, राजनैतिक सुझबुझ भएका महिलालाई उठाउँदा पुरुषहरूले धेरै अप्ठ्यारा व्यहोर्नु पर्ने हुँदो रहेछ। शिक्षित व्यक्तिले आफ्नो र प्रतिपक्षीको शक्तिको लेखाजोखा आफै गर्छ, चुनावमा उत्र्दैमा विधायिकामा जना सकिन्छ भन्ने कुनै निश्चित कुरा होइन र यसले आफ्नो व्यक्तिगत विलाई उचाल्नुको सट्टा खसाल्न पनि सक्छ भन्ने लागेर आफै पछि हटेका थिए भने पुरुषहरूलाई पनि सरल र निमुखा महिलालाई खडा गर्दा नै सजिलो हुने महसूस भएको कुरा अन्तरवार्ताबाट थाहा लागेको थियो। जतिजति निमुखा र सिधा साधा व्यक्ति भयो त्यति यिनीहरूलाई चित्त बुझाउन सजिलो हुने तथा जति निमुखालाई प्रयोग गर्न सजिलो हुन्छ त्यति सजिलो राजनैतिक ज्ञातालाई हुँदैन भन्ने मान्यता अनुरूप यस्तो भएको देखिन्छ। त्यसैले उम्मेदवारहरूको चयन गर्दा वाहेक उनीहरूसँग कुनै प्रकारको सल्लाह गर्नु पर्ने भएन, कसैको समर्थनमा मौन बसाउन सजिलो भयो साथै एक अर्को पार्टीको बिचमा चुनावी सम्झौता गर्न पनि ती महिलाको व्यक्तिगत सहमति लिनु पर्ने कुनै भय र बाध्यता पुरुषहरूलाई परेन। यी सरल महिलाको निमुखा पनको फायदा उठाइएका ज्यादा निम्न स्तरको चुनावी तालमेल रा. प्र. पा. (थापा) र रा.प्र.पा. (चन्द)का बिचमा देखिएको थियो। भक्तपुर क्षेत्र नं. १ बाट उठेको रा.प्र.पा. (थापा) की उम्मेदवार मखन देउजा र क्षेत्र नं. २ बाट उठेकी रा.प्र.पा. (चन्द) की उम्मेदवार उमा देवी शाहले आफ्नो दाजुहरूको फाइदाको लागि मात्र आ-आफ्नो उम्मेदवारी प्रस्तुत गर्नु परेको थियो। रा.प्र.पा. (थापा) र रा.प्र.पा. (चन्द) को निर्वाचन सम्झौता

अनुरूप सुरेन्द्र प्रताप शाह (रा.प्र.पा. चन्द) र गणेश बहादुर खत्री रा.प्र.पा. (थापा) का उम्मेदवारहरूले आफ्नो वैनीहरूलाई उठाउने तर दुवै जनालाई मौन रहन बाध्य गराई आफूहरू विजयी हुने सपना देखेका थिए। महिलाको पारिवारिक तथा संस्थागत शोषणको यो एउटा स्पष्ट नमूना हो। त्यसै गरी भक्तपुरको क्षेत्र नं. २ की संयुक्त जनमोर्चाकी उम्मेदवार सूर्य माया श्रेष्ठलाई सोही क्षेत्रका भैरव रिसाल (ने.म.कि.पा.) का लागि मौन वसाइएको थियो।

त्यस्तै संभौता ललितपुर जिल्लामा पनि भएको थियो। ललितपुर क्षेत्र नं. १ की रा.प्र.पा. (चन्द) की उम्मेदवार कविता शाहले रा.प्र.पा. (थापा) का उम्मेदवार केशर बहादुर विष्टका लागि र सोही क्षेत्रबाट उठेकी संयुक्त जनमोर्चा नेपालकी मीरा राजोपाध्यायले ने.क.पा. (एमाले) का मीठाराम शर्मा वजगाईको सफलताका लागि मौन बसी दिनु परेको तथ्य अन्तरवार्ताबाट थाहा भएको थियो।

उपसंहार

यद्यपि चुनावी प्रतिस्पर्धामा उत्रेका महिलाको संख्या यस निर्वाचनमा ज्यादै कम रह्यो भन्न मिल्दैन। तथापि कूल उम्मेदवार मध्ये ७ जना (८.७%) लाई सफलता मिलेको छ। त्यसमा पनि विजयी महिलाहरूको व्यक्तिगत पृष्ठभूमिलाई नियाल्दा अधिकांश रूपमा राजनैतिक रूपबाट चर्चित महिलाहरूले नै जितेका छन्। चाहे विद्यार्थी जीवनमा होस् चाहे कुनै उत्तरदायी पेशामा संलग्न हुँदा होस् धेरै समय राजनैतिक कृयाकलापमा विताएकाहरू नै संसदमा पुगेका छन्। उपत्यकाको सन्दर्भमा ३० जना मध्ये साहनाको मात्रै विजयले यो तर्क अझै सत्य सावित भएको छ। संवैधानिक प्रावधान नभएको भए अहिलेको संसदमा सात जनाले प्रतिनिधित्व गर्ने थिए अथवा थिएनन् यो अलग कुरा हो। तर विजयी महिलाहरूको पृष्ठभूमिलाई हेर्दा संविधान प्रदत्त अधिकार भन्दा उम्मेदवारको व्यक्तिगत खूबी, संघर्षशीलता, उनीहरूको राजनैतिक कृयाकलाप, समाज प्रति समर्पित भावना इत्यादि नै महत्वपूर्ण हुन आएको देखिन्छ।

यदि महिलाको आफ्नो क्रियाकलाप प्रमुख कुरा हो भने संवैधानिक प्रावधान के का लागि त? यो प्रावधान केवल आफ्नो पार्टी भित्र महिलाहरूको अस्तित्व बोध गराउनका लागि मात्र सहायक बनेको छ किनकि नेपाली कांग्रेस र एमाले जसका क्रमशः ५ जना र २ जना प्रतिनिधि सदनमा पुगेका छन्। संविधानमा यो शर्त नभएको भए यी सबै जना उम्मेदवार हुन पाउने कुरामा पनि निश्चित हुन नसकिने कुरा कल्याणी शाहको भनाइबाट भल्कन्छ- महिला उम्मेदवारले हार्नु वा जित्नु यो गौण कुरा हो। संवैधानिक प्रावधान नभएको भए अहिले उठाएका जति महिला कुनै पार्टीले पनि उठाउने थिएनन्।

संविधान निर्माण प्रकृया र राजनैतिक संगठनहरू बीच महिला सम्बन्धी धारणा आ-आफ्नै किसिमले अघि बढेको देखिन्छ। एकातिर संविधानले महिलालाई

राजनीतिमा जागरूक गराउन पार्टीहरूले आफ्नो उम्मेदवारीको ५% महिला प्रस्तुत गर्नु पर्ने वाध्यताको सृजना गर्‍यो भने अर्कोतिर संविधानलाई व्यवहारिकता प्रदान गर्नुपर्ने पार्टीहरूले आफ्नै आन्तरिक संगठन भित्र उनीहरूको आवश्यकताको महशुस नगरेको देखिन्छ। फलतः खोजी खोजी उठाइएका उम्मेदवारहरू जो आफ्नो पार्टी भित्र ग्राह्य हुन सकेका छैनन्। उनीहरू अधिराज्य भरिका महिलाको हितको नाउँमा प्रतिस्पर्धामा देखिए। राजनैतिक अधिकारको प्राप्तिको अर्थ महिलाले निर्वाचनमा प्रत्यासी बन्न पाउनु अथवा पार्टीगतहरूमा उठाउन पर्ने वाध्यता सृजना गरिनु मात्र नभई आ-आफ्ना संगठन भित्र उचित मर्यादा र उनीहरूको दक्षता अनुसार उत्तरदायी पद सम्हाल्न पाउनु पनि हो। तब मात्रै उनीहरूको राजनैतिक अभ्यास बढ्दछ।

फेरि राजनैतिक समस्यालाई आर्थिक सामाजिक र सांस्कृतिक परिवेश भन्दा अलग दृष्टिले हेर्दा पनि समस्याको समाधान हुन गान्छो भएको छ। एकातिर पुरुष र महिला बीचको शैक्षिक विषमतालाई घटाउने कुनै विशेष कार्यक्रम छैन, एकातिर आर्थिक रूपबाट शोषित महिलाको लागि कुनै व्यवहारिकता अपनाईएको छैन यस्तो स्थितिमा महिलालाई राजनैतिक अधिकार दिएको नाउँमा माथिबाट प्रदत्त अधिकारबाट उनीहरूको कल्याण होला भनी अपेक्षा गर्न सकिंदैन। शिक्षित र आत्मनिर्भर नभएका महिलाबाट समस्या समाधानको अपेक्षा गर्न सकिंदैन। अशिक्षित महिला प्रतिनिधि सभामा पुगेर पनि उनीहरूले आफ्नो दायित्व अनुसार कार्य गर्न असमर्थ रहन्छन्। उनीहरूलाई दीर्घकालिन रूपमा महिलाको हित अथवा अहित गर्ने कुराको विश्लेषण गर्ने खुबी नै रहँदैन जसबाट समस्त महिलाले के अपेक्षा गर्न सक्दछन्? त्यसै गरेर आत्म निर्भर हुन नसकेका महिलाले पनि उचित नमूना प्रस्तुत गर्न र दीर्घकालिन रूपमा संघर्ष गर्न सक्ने कुरा अपवादको रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ। हाम्रो जस्तो पितृ प्रधान मुलुकमा महिलाले आफ्नो पौरखमा बाच्ने कुनै अवसर पाएका छैनन्। स्वयं पराश्रित महिला जो अर्काको निगाहमा बाच्नु परेको छ उनै निगाहा गर्नेसंग मुकाविला गर्नु पनि सजिलो देखिंदैन।

महिला उन्नतिको लागि सिद्धान्त भन्दा व्यवहारिकताको खाँचो देखिन्छ। महिला पुरुषहरू भन्दा कम शिक्षित छन् त्यसको लागि शिक्षा नियमावलीमा समानताको उल्लेख गरेर पुग्दैन। उनीहरूको लागि उचित शैक्षित वातावरणको सृजना गरिनुका साथै प्रभावकारी कार्यक्रमहरू संचालन गरिनु पर्दछ। त्यस्तै महिला र पुरुष बीचको आर्थिक विषमता र शोषण घटाउने कार्यको थालनी परिवारदेखि नै थालिनु पर्दछ। किनकी सांस्कृतिक विकृतिका शिकार महिलाहरू घरबाट नै हुन थाल्दछन्। एक शिक्षित महिलाले मात्र आफु आर्थिक र राजनैतिक रूपबाट कति शोषित छु थाहा पाउन सकिन्छन् र आफ्ना अधिकारको लागि खट्न सकिन्छन्। यसरी अरूको निगाहाबाट प्राप्त भएको अधिकारले मात्र महिलाको उत्थान हुने देखिंदैन। सुयोग्य नेतृत्वको विकासको लागि व्यक्ति आफै समर्पित हुनु पर्दछ।

संख्यात्मक वृद्धि भन्दा गुणात्मकतालाई प्राथमिकता दिनु महिलाको लागि वढि फलदायी हुन सक्दछ। महिलाहरूले पनि अधिकार प्राप्त गर्ने नाउँमा कुनै खास ठाउँमा सानो-तिनो उपलब्धिलाई समस्याको समाधान भएको सम्झनुको सट्टा आम महिलाको समग्र रूपमा स्थिति सुधारनको लागि विद्यमान समस्याका कारणहरू पत्ता लगाई तिनीहरूको निराकरणका उपायहरू खोजिनु पर्दछ। शिक्षित र आत्मनिर्भर महिलाहरू आफैले राजनैतिक अधिकारको खोजी गरी उपभोग गर्न सक्दछन् जव कि अशिक्षित र परनिर्भर रहनेहरूलाई संविधानद्वारा प्रदत्त अधिकार 'भिल्लको देशमा मणि' जस्तो मात्र हुन्छ।

टिप्पणी

- १) समानताको अधिकार धारा १ ज को उपधारा १,२ र ३
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- २) नेपालको संविधानको २०४७, धारा ११४
- ३) निर्वाचित महिला उम्मेदवारहरू

क्र.सं.	नाम	जिल्ला क्षेत्र नं.	राजनैतिक दल
१.	शैलजा आचार्य	मोरंग ५	नेपाली कांग्रेस
२.	मीना पाण्डे	सर्लाही २	नेपाली कांग्रेस
३.	लीला कोइराला	घनुषा २	नेपाली कांग्रेस
४.	साहना प्रधान	काठमाडौं ४	ने.क.पा. (एमाले)
५.	मैयाँ देवी श्रेष्ठ	गोरखा २	नेपाली कांग्रेस
६.	उमा अधिकारी	पर्वत २	नेपाली कांग्रेस
७.	थम माया थापा	म्याग्दी १	ने.क.पा. (एमाले)

४. नेपालको संविधानको धारा ४५, उपधारा ७ तथा धारा ४७ को उपधारा १

५. नेपाली कांग्रेसको घोषणा पत्र पृष्ठ नं ३१

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१. UNICEF - Children and Women of Nepal
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३. श्री ५ को सरकार,
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क्र.सं.	राजनैतिक संगठन, दल वा स्वतन्त्र उम्मेदवार	उम्मेदवारी दर्ता	मनोनयन पत्र रद्द भएको	नाम फिर्ता लिएको	कायम भएको अन्तिम संख्या		
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२.	ने.क.पा. (एमाले)	१८३	१	१५	१६८	१	१७७
३.	रा.प्र.पा. (थापा)	१७०	-	७	१५४	९	१६३
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८.	ने.रा. जनमुक्ति मोर्चा	५३	१	२	४७	३	५०
९.	नेपाल मजदुर किसान पार्टी	३८	१	७	२८	२	३०
१०.	ने.क.पा. (वर्मा)	३७	-	२	३१	४	३५
११.	राष्ट्रिय जनता पार्टी (एच)	३३	-	५	२७	१	२८
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१५.	राष्ट्रिय जनता पार्टी नेपाल	१०	-	१	८८	१	९
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१८.	दलित मजदुर किसान पार्टी	२	-	१	१	-	१
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२.	श्रीमती कमला कोइराला	६८	०.११
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१७.	निर्मला घिमेरे	८१	०.१५
१८.	शोभा त्रिपाठी	२१७	०.४१
१९.	श्रीमती गौरी कार्की	९४	०.१५
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२२.	उमादेवी शाह	१५६	०.३६
२३.	सूर्यमाला श्रेष्ठ	११३	०.२५
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८.	नेपाल सद्भावना पार्टी	पाँच औला भएको हात	७५	५	६.६
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| १. नमीता सिंह | - पति पार्टीको केन्द्रिय कमिटीमा सदस्य |
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BOOK REVIEW

Muna Madan. A Play in the Jhyaure Folk Tradition by Laxmi Prasad Devkota. Translated from the Nepali by Ananda P. Shrestha. Nirala Publications, New Delhi and Jaipur, 1995. Pages 56.

The title of this book is misleading: although it is certainly a narrative, *Muna Madan* is not a play. This 40-page poem is the best-selling and most widely-known work in the whole of twentieth-century Nepali literature. Devkota, the greatest writer Nepal has yet produced, declared from his deathbed in 1959 that everything else he had written might be burned so long as *Muna Madan* was spared. Sixty years after its composition, Nepali literature has changed beyond recognition, and *Muna Madan* is one of a handful of key texts that mark decisive turns in the course of its evolution. It is a work of great charm set to the musical rhythm of the *jhyaure* metre of folksongs: the texture of its language is rich but wholly colloquial, and the messages it conveys, whether overtly or implicitly, tell us a great deal about the inner mind of Devkota and the outer realities of Nepal. It is in fact highly significant as a marker of the prevalent trend of cultural change in 20th-century Nepal. Devkota took a Newari folktale that sprang from an essentially Buddhist context, and reworked and embellished it. He 'Nepali-ised' and 'Hindu-ised' it so that it no longer spoke only to its Newar Buddhist constituency, but held a wealth of meaning for Nepali-speaking Hindus too. The poem richly deserves an audience beyond the confines of the Nepali-speaking world as well, and in fact this is the third English translation to appear.

Muna Madan tells the story of Madan, a young man from Kathmandu who has resolved to travel to Lhasa to seek his fortune. He is driven by his desire to grant his aged mother her final wishes and pay off his family's debts. His wife, Muna, fears that he will never return and begs him not to go, but he sets out none the less. Madan does indeed make a fortune in Lhasa, but stays longer than intended before heading for home with his bags of gold and musk. On the way home he falls ill and is rescued by a humble Tibetan, a kind of 'Himalayan Samaritan', to use David Rubin's words. When he does eventually reach home he finds his mother on the point of dying and discovers that his wife has already died of a broken heart. Unable to face life

without them, he too passes away at the end of the poem. Most Nepalis will know the plot well, and will also be aware of the marvellous way in which Devkota paints in the detail.

Having read the first page of the 'Foreword' by Yuyutsu R. D. several times, I still am not sure what it is that Yuyutsu R. D. is trying to describe:

'An awe (sic) enveloped the gathering. Beyond the solemn sea of innocent faces, my eyes reached for some blue hillrange to avoid a breakdown....'

'...Somewhere in the gathering of emotionally surcharged (sic) students sat my own Sriju, sullen. "What am I to speak now?" A terror seized me.'

My *guess* is that Yuyutsu R. D. is describing an occasion (real or imagined?) on which he (or some one else?) unveiled a bust or statue of a poet (possibly Devkota?) But this is not at all clear, and before we can gather our wits we are on to a eulogy of the book in question: *Muna Madan*, Yuyutsu R. D. tells us, 'guides and controls the moral and social lives of the Nepalese people', whether in 'battlefields of Folkland, restaurants of New Delhi, lice-infested wine-shops of Kathmandu...' As we pause to wonder where 'Folkland' is, or which Kathmandu bar the publisher is maligning, we are informed that 'some mediocre hacks from the London School of Oriental Studies might call it a romantic tragedy. It's not!' Who are these second-rate journalists? Where, indeed, is the 'London School of Oriental Studies'? Shame upon them all, anyway. Once Mr. Yuyutsu R. D. has finished with the purple prose and the airing of odd and inexplicable grievances, he provides us with a few helpful comments about the poem, although a great deal is left unsaid. His remarks about the significance of dreams and omens in the poem are well-placed, and his point about love not being its major motif is valid. His arguments might actually be aimed at my own description of *Muna Madan*, in which I stated that the poem was 'primarily a romantic tragedy', but then went on to detail all the features which made it rather more than that (*Himalayan Voices* (Berkeley 1991), p. 42). If so, Yuyutsu R. D. seems not to have read the rest of my paragraph, because he goes on to make exactly the same points I myself made about the poem's philosophical content, and ends by saying that Devkota made 'tragedy intense and inevitable'. A narrative poem in which three of the four characters lie dead at the end does seem rather tragic to me, and part of Devkota's significance is that he took the influence of the English Romantic movement and transposed it to an authentically

Nepalese context. *Muna Madan* is not just a romantic tragedy, it is much more: there is really no need to contrive an artificial disagreement about this.

The biographical sketch of Devkota contains many errors: Devkota went into exile in Banaras in 1947, not in 1934 as stated; the 'advent of democracy' occurred in 1950/51, not in 1957; and the supposed 'influence [on Devkota] of great Nepali poet Gopal Prasad Rimal' is given more prominence than it deserves.

The translator of a poem such as this faces a daunting task. There are I think three elements that ask to be transposed from the Nepali into (in this case) the English. The first is its actual *meaning*. Obviously, this can be translated mechanically as long as the translator has a thorough command of both languages. But the text in question is a work of poetry, and readers of the translation should be aware of this; they might also like to know that it is in rhyming, metrical verse. So the second element is the translation's *form*. Finally, it should be clear from the *tone* of the translation that the poem is not a mere ditty, and that it makes forceful social comments and asks profound questions about the nature of life, love, duty, faith and patriotism. In my view, it is impossible to preserve all three elements and thereby recreate *Muna Madan* in its entirety in English. To produce a rhyming, metrical translation, one has to take liberties with the literal meaning and content, either by adding extraneous words and phrases, or by leaving out parts of the original. If one decides that the meaning is all, there can be only an occasional rhyme or half-rhyme. The tone is the subtlest element. It was possible for Devkota to write in rhyming metrical Nepali and still to sound profound. But English rhyming couplets run the risk of making the poem sound childish: a subtler rhyme scheme is required. Ananda Shrestha writes a short introductory note in which he describes the difficulties he faced with refreshing honesty, saying 'I have ambitiously attempted to maintain both the sense and sound of the original', while admitting that he has at times 'interwoven' words to aid him in this. Having recently completed my own translation of the poem, I have the greatest sympathy for Shrestha. But I am afraid that what he does rather more than one would wish is to cut the content of lines, or extend them with irrelevant or redundant words and phrases, in order to make them rhyme and scan. It does not matter that the syntax required of the English is sometimes tortuous, nor that some of Devkota's most memorable phrases are lost in the process: the rhyme and the scan are all.

The omissions rob readers of much of the richness of the Nepali original. For example, Madan uses many epithets for Muna in the dialogue between them that precedes his departure for Tibet. In the line '*he merī munā! nabhana tyaso, jūnamā phulekī!*' he addresses her as *jūnamā phulekī*, a

flower that blooms in the moonlight—a rare and unique thing—but the translation gives us only the bland ‘dearest’, in order that ‘fret’ (‘Don’t say that my Muna, oh dearest do not fret’) can rhyme with ‘forget’ in the next line. Later, Madan calls her ‘Nāgakanyā’ (*‘he nāgakanyā pahād naḍṭī!’*) but this is ignored and the redundant words ‘my love, my dear’ are introduced instead to help the line scan (‘Muna my love, my dear, come not to mountainous land’). Madan also asks Muna to stay behind with his mother, so that his mother can enjoy the sight of her ‘moon-face’ (*‘tī herī basun yo candramuhāra’*), but the translation only gives us ‘Stay with her my dear, do not leave her side’.

On other occasions, Shrestha chooses to replace metaphors and similes that are unmistakably Indo-Nepali with formulae which he perhaps imagines will make more sense to the English reader. Again, this robs the poem of some of the Nepali flavour for which it is famed, and undermines Yuyutsu R. D.’s reference in the Foreword to the importance of ‘natural images central to the Nepalese brainscape’. For instance, when Madan assures Muna that he will return, using the metaphor of the *cakhevā* bird (unpoetically, the ‘ruddy goose’ in English) whose devotion to his mate is proverbial, Shrestha gives us ‘And like a homing pigeon I’ll be home some day’, which misses the point completely. Similarly, when Madan asks Muna to smile as she bids him farewell, (*‘anāra-dānā dāmīkā lahara kholera hāmsana’*) he likens her teeth to pomegranate seeds. But Shrestha cannot scan his line with pomegranate seeds, and opts for ‘Let me see the rows of pearls that glitter when you smile’.

Sometimes, Shrestha over-interprets, making prosaic in the translation what was poetic in the Nepali. One of the most potent images of the poem is of the sun setting while Madan lies dying of cholera, alone in the forests of Tibet, (*‘paścimatira dinakā āmkhā ragatamā dubechan’*, literally ‘in the west the eyes of the day have sunk in blood’). This is rendered ‘The day ending in the west, had turned a bloody red.’ Devkota did not use the word ‘red’ here, but conveyed an image of the sun sinking into the blood-red colours of sunset, overlaid in the use of the word *ragata* with intimations of death and ending. One would not know this from the translation.

Although some terms and references that might be obscure to non-Nepalis are half-explained in very brief footnotes, many are not. For instance, no care is taken to identify the various monuments of Lhasa that are mentioned in the poem. The line ‘Amban, Linkor, and Yutok Shyampa all had a lovely gleam’ does not enlighten the reader as to what these are. Are they buildings? people? subspecies of a particularly glimmery yak? As regards the first, the Nepali actually reads *ambānko mahal*: ‘the Ambans’ palace’, the Ambans being representatives of the Chinese emperors.

The most famous lines of the whole poem deserve careful and accurate translation, but Shrestha gives us the following travesty: 'Dirt of the hand's, a bag of gold, what use is it in kind? It's better to eat nettles and greens with a peace of mind.' It is not clear at all that wealth is being equated with the dirt on one's hands in the first line, in the sense that it is of no real value, and is quickly gone. The words 'in kind' are wholly redundant, serving only to achieve the rhyme, and 'a peace of mind' is simply bad grammar, hinting at what this publisher might expect to receive from his more discerning readers.

This review comes from one who has grappled with the same problems that Ananda Shrestha has faced but has arrived at different solutions, and is therefore more greatly concerned than the average 'charmed tourist' to read translations that are both accurate and sympathetic. I disagree with Shrestha's approach to the translation of *Muna Madan*, because I believe that he has tried to achieve the impossible, and has inevitably failed rather more than he has succeeded. This is a personal point of view, and is perhaps a matter of a taste as much as anything else, for there are things to praise in this translation too. The occasional verse from Shrestha's translation does spring out at one as an example of skillful translation within these metrical constraints:

'I'd love to see your hands adorned, in ornaments of gold,
And build our crumbling house anew, for debt has made it old'.

— Michael Hutt

BOOK REVIEW

Bhutan: A Movement in Exile. D.N.S. Dhakal and Christopher Strawn. Nirala Publications., Jaipur, 1994. Pages 631. Price: ICRs. 495 IC.

Except for articles in journals and newspapers and some pamphlets put out by human rights organisations, there has been no exhaustive publication to date on Bhutanese refugees as such that effectively publicizes and promotes their cause in the camps of Jhapa, Nepal at the international level. Though Bhutanese refugees now number some 90,000 plus, almost as much as the Tibetan refugees in Nepal, they have yet to receive the political support of the international community anywhere matching the economic support they have been receiving from various social service organisations the world over. The book under review entitled *Bhutan: A Movement in Exile* by D.N.S. Dhakal and Christopher Strawn is probably the first exhaustive publication on the Bhutanese refugees crisis which could well provide the much needed publicity and information to the world at large as to what triggered the crisis and what the probable solution to it could be. The book is published with the firm intention of filling this information void and making heard "the anguished cry of a vanquished population rendered homeless by an unjust system."

The book is basically divided into five major sections. The first section, heavily drawn from the literature of Michael Aris and Leo Rose (who the authors feel are critical and relatively impartial compared to other writers on Bhutan) highlights Bhutan's ethnic mosaic, the history of Bhutan and the evolution of modern political institutions. The second part, as the authors themselves state, "is an amalgam of documented trends and personal accounts which form a basic, but not scrupulously precise history of Southern Bhutan and the Southern Bhutanese." It deals with Nepali migration to Bhutan, Nepali Bhutanese political activity, and the integration of Southern Bhutan. The third part, a crucial section of the book, is basically the refugees' side of the story drawn from interviews with them and reports by various organisations. It graphically brings into focus the seeds of dissent, the genesis of the Bhutanese refugee crisis, the government strategy, the crackdown, refugee problems and political parties and human rights groups. The fourth section provides an insight into the perceived fears of the Nepalese

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Bhutanese, elites, traditionalists and bureaucratic politics, the king in the crisis, and the foreigner's impact. The fifth section examines Bhutan and hill politics, Nepal and Greater Nepal and Bhutan and Indian policy. The volume includes full references, bibliography and end notes.

Though the publication comprises documentation and analysis of Bhutan and the empirical data on the subject so far available, along with the nature of the democratic movement, one cannot help doubting the objectivity of the work as one of the authors is a full-time executive of a dissident organisation. Therefore it is possible that he is more sympathetic towards the cause of the refugees and dissident viewpoints. No doubt, Bhutanese government sources, especially the *kuensel*, the country's only newspaper, the dialogue and resolutions of Bhutan's National Assembly, and books and pamphlets published by the government have been used; but these are relatively scanty and thus gives the impression of being deliberately downplayed to present the refugees in a more favourable light. Moreover, why the authors refrained from analysing the reasons behind the Bhutanese government's Southern policy, could for the wrong reasons add further strength to this argument.

The fifth section of the book, however, is a scholarly piece of writing and provides a critical and analytical glimpse into regional politics which encompass Nepal, and parts or the whole of Nepali dominated Indian states and the Indian Union. This includes the 1975 merger of Sikkim with India, the violent 1986-88 Gorkha National Liberation Front uprising, and the difficult situation that the whole crisis has put Nepal into vis-a-vis the "Greater Nepal" bogey now being ruthlessly whipped up by Bhutan. There is however, a great deal of truth in the argument that India is capable of intervening and influencing the crisis and bringing it to at least some kind of resolution. But why India has refrained from doing so until now and has maintained instead a pregnant silence on the issue, knowing fully well that the "quiet" diplomacy it suggested to Kathmandu and Thimphu is bound to fail, is mystifying to say the least. Right now India is playing its cards very close to its chest, and both Nepal and Bhutan must realise that if they bring India to play mediator, it will do so only with its vital interests in mind. The book deftly brings home this point and it will be worthwhile for both governments to remember this and come together – no matter how difficult – when they meet for the next round of talks. The proposal of course requires sacrifice from both sides, and the authors correctly point out that it will be to Bhutan's disadvantage if the crisis remains unresolved or partially resolved. An unconventional approach to the refugee crisis – no matter how long or tedious – could be the only permanent solution, and the countries involved will have to pursue it religiously with both political and diplomatic finesse.

In a publication of this nature photographs could have played a vital role in promoting the viewpoints propounded within its pages. But the photographs provided are not only drastically insufficient but also of poor washed-out quality which can hardly reflect the plight of the refugees in the camps of Jhapa. Moreover, the abundance of errors – grammatical and otherwise – seriously mars the quality of a volume which is otherwise a goldmine of information for policy makers, diplomats and scholars interested in Bhutan; its socio-political crisis and the impact that the democratic movement is likely to have on the politics and peace of the South Asian Region.

– Ananda P. Shrestha

BOOK REVIEW

Social History of Nepal. T.R. Vaidya, Triratna Manandhar and Shankar Lal Joshi. Anmol Publication, New Delhi, 1993. Pages 336. Price NC Rs. 400/-.

Until a couple of decades back, Nepalese history was virtually based solely on political affairs, where a few foreign scholars wrote the history from literary sources that considered history as only the work and lineages of kings and chieftains. Thereafter, Nepalese history and in its every aspect is being rediscovered by the efforts of Nepali scholars regarding the reading and translation of inscriptions and written documents. The very ancient period, however, remains obscure because we are forced to sketch our imagination solely from the literary sources and legendary traditions. Many Lichchhvi, Malla and Shah inscriptions are being recovered and published by Nepali scholars to endorse the various aspects of our past. The existing narrower view of our past history is now being expanded to embrace the social aspects and different life styles of the people. The social history of Nepal allows us to know our present condition and its cultural and social behaviours. Nepali society is heterogenous, where various groups and their behaviours are reflected in each of the country's unique languages, dresses, food habits and cultural traditions. It is, therefore, important to observe the historical view of our own society.

The book under review *Social History of Nepal* is written by three scholars, presenting an important theme out of their long experience in teaching history. The authors of the book candidly admit that this work was a project report submitted Research Division, Tribhuvan University in 1986. But, it is no doubt the only book ever written in English about the social history of Nepal. The book is divided into ten chapters including the conclusion. The first chapter is an introductory which deals with the different ethnic groups of Nepal stretching from the ancient times of the Gopals, Mahispalas, Nagas, Kiratas, Koliyas, Mallas, Vajjis, Lichchhavis, Guptas, Shakyas, Khasas, Magars, Gurungs, Tharus, Chepangs, Kushandas, Derais, Newars, Muslims and Tamangs. The second chapter describes the social structure. Here the authors have laid emphasis on the change of the social structure after the penetration of Hindu values and institutions and their impacts on the autochthonous communities. The third chapter is about the

family system based on historical documents, and it sheds considerable light on the nuclear and joint family systems. The fourth chapter elaborates the habitational sites of ancient Nepal, narrated by various inscriptions and other literary sources. The fifth chapter descriptively debunks the position of women from the Lichchhavi to Rana period. The subsequent chapter deal with food habits, dresses and ornaments social entertainments, and finally, a brief discussion and conclusion of their whole analysis. Almost all sections of society, such as people, food habit, dresses and ornaments, position of women, entertainments and education are described here in detail based on available documents.

Only the inscriptions tell what the Lichchhavi society looked like, while the society of the medieval period has plentiful sources like copper plates palm leaves, *vamshavali*, and accounts of foreign visitors for unraveling the social, cultural and religious life of the people. Similarly, many documents of Rana period are found even in the government offices that make easy to sketch the social condition. That probably explains why the book is heavily concentrated on Rana period with relatively less description of Lichchhavi and least of the medieval period in its developmental stages. The makes it seem that the book is imbalanced in the combination of description of available sources.

One big problem is that the authors do not give a clear view about word 'Aryan' and 'Hindu'. In one place they specify the Aryan in the manner "in fact Aryan is one sense meant a group of tribes in an ancient world" (p. 23) and they also noted, "the Vedas also have mentioned the Anarya (non-aryan) worshipping the phallus. If we follow it those Gurungs, Magars, Mahispalas, Gopals, Kirates were not Hindu" (p.22). This seems to indicate a lack of serious consideration. In fact, Arya comprises physical character whereas the Hindu term is used by British India to distinguish and specify particular kinds of religious practitioners (e.g. idol worshiper) from other communities. If the Vedic text described the Kirat as a phallus worshippers, they could be bracketed into the ancient concept of Hindu culture. If the Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Kiratas, Bhotiyas and many other groups were non-Hindu and the process of Hinduization was started from south, the writers fail to explain about the stages of Hindu penetration in northern hilly regions. Even the authors argument that up to the early medieval period these communities (Magar, Gurung, Tamang, Kirat, Bhotiya etc.) continued to adapt their own traditional religious faiths, "the concept of Hinduization did not have much impact on them" (p. 33), are not well coordinated. In the early medieval period the influx of different communities and religious thinkers actually made a great impact on the social structure of Nepali society-the one from the south, Simaraunagarh, and other from western Nepal, thus enriching

the Hinduism in the Kathmandu Valley. Moreover, during the 14th century A.D. a Muslim invasion occurred in the Kathmandu Valley and consequently distorted the social traditions of both Hindus and Buddhists; but at the same time it provided the opportunity to accumulate two religious traditions into a single stream of tantrism. Following the Muslim invasion the different communities bound themselves in their own customs for the safety of their new-found culture. The traditions of early marriage and sati in Hindu society were the consequence impact of this invasion, just to cite two examples out of many where the authors have not paid adequate attention.

Similarly, the religious worldview that shaped the social condition through the historical ages is completely omitted by the authors, notwithstanding the authors' affirmation that "one of the reasons of stability in Nepalese society was the domination of the religion in every walk of life" (331). Moreover, it is the religious practices that governed the society in its own manners. As we come across the Nepalese society in 13th century at a time when the important educational centres like Nalanda and Takshasila were targeted by Muslim invasion, many scholars had fled away towards the north with their Buddhist tantrik texts. Buddhist bihars in Nepal at that time were educational centres where many Indian and Tibetan scholars visited to learn the lore of Tantrism. These activities made a sea of change in the society, especially in the religious sector. At the same time, Buddhist social order was also embedded in the Hindu system, and some gods and goddesses were worshipped by both communities too.

One confusing reference given by authors is "Malla Youdha kara" in their note of the tax of wrestling (p. 179). But in the Lichchhavi inscriptions the term "Malla Youdha", described along the "Go Youdha" signifying the tax imposed on the sheep fighting ceremony, however, was later used in the realm of wrestling top. The term "Malla Potakara" of the Lichchhavi inscriptions concedes this fact without any argument.

On the historical perspective of different ethnic groups the authors mentioned that 'there were many communities like Magar, Gurung, Tamang, Hindu and others who enjoyed full freedom to lead their own way of life' (32), and on the other, they (Magar, Khash, Tamang, Lama, Bhotiya) were socially, economically and political suppressed people (p. 39). This is grossly inconsistent, to say the least. So far, the study of history of Nepal relates that many ethnic groups had full freedom in their cultural, social and economic life. Even the king did not impose any hard rules and regulations against the social, economic and religious freedom of different groups. Nepalese history, in fact, drew strength from its diversity.

One of the most striking things for students and researchers of general history is the deficit in footnotes and bibliography. Therefore, it is limited on

basic information only. However, the authors' prefatory remark that 'we have suppressed the footnote and bibliographical accounts, keeping in view the length of the book is less than convincing (p.vi).

Furthermore, the authors deliberately appear to be remiss in some of the examples as state "*suruwal (tunic)*" (p. 178) and "peacocks were considered as the vehicle of goddess Lakshmi" (p. 216). In fact, *suruwal* is the lower garment of typical Nepali dress and later on is the vehicle of Kumar, the son of Lord Siva and Kumari, the Shakti goddess. Beside these, the book bears some printing errors, though the readers can themselves easily correct them while reading. These pitfalls notwithstanding, the book provides some information on the basic structure of Nepali society throughout the ages in a single treatise. In this sense, the book is useful for those students and researchers interested in this field.

- Dilli Raj Sharma